The Holy Seed Has Been Defiled

The Interethnic Marriage Dilemma in Ezra 9-10

Willa M. Johnson

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Hebrew Bible Monographs, 33

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SHEFFIELD PHOENIX PRESS
2011

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Published by Sheffield Phoenix Press
Department of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield
Sheffield S3 7QB

www.sheffieldphoenix.com

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A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

Typeset by CA Typesetting Ltd
Printed on acid-free paper by Lightning Source UK Ltd, Milton Keynes

ISBN-13 978-1-907534-21-8
ISSN 1747-9614

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Acknowledgments

This study is the result of my doctoral dissertation completed in 1999. In the intervening years, I have worked to more thoroughly examine the problem and propose a plausible understanding of the text. There are several people who have supplied me an endless amount of goodwill, none more than Dr David Clines from the University of Sheffield, UK, who refused to give up on either me or the project. I admire you and I hope that the book lives up to your standards of excellence. Similarly, I thank Dr Keith Whitelam who read the dissertation manuscript and with whom I had the honor of presenting my first ideas for the study on a panel at the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Conference in Philadelphia. My sincere thanks to Dr David Gunn, who on more than one occasion provided me encouragement and offered me advice. I am especially grateful to my Vanderbilt University professors, Drs Walter Harrelson, Douglas A. Knight, Laura Junker and the late James Barr, all of who challenged me to read broadly and think critically. I am particularly indebted to Professor Amy-Jill Levine, who joined my doctoral committee after the project had begun. Dr Levine urged me to think more thoughtfully and thoroughly about aspects of Ezra–Nehemiah. Over the years, her advice proved to be the catalyst that motivated me more than any other. She taught me the importance of integrity in scholarship and I hope the work honors that notion. Many heartfelt thanks to Drs Diane Gottheil, Gary Porton, Rajeshwari Pandharipande and Wayne Pitard from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who provided me the opportunity to teach as a Visiting Lecturer at the University while I wrote my dissertation. They treated me as a colleague even as they answered my questions. I offer thanks to my friends at the University of Mississippi. Of the many who have been stalwart supporters, I deeply appreciate the assistance and friendship provided to me by Mrs Freda Knight, and Drs Holly Reynolds and Jan Murray, who have helped me to navigate great difficulty with sage counsel. Drs Robbie Ethridge, Kirsten Dellinger, Susan Grayzel-Ward, and Nancy Bercaw have been more inspirational to me than they know. In a myriad of ways, the four of you bring great dignity and wisdom to our University of Mississippi community. I express sincere appreciation to my colleagues at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology led by our Chair, Dr Kirsten Dellinger. All of you have been enormously generous. Thanks for a peaceful environment in which to work, something

I do not take for granted. The wonderful warm meals you have made to nourish me back to health and the friendship that you all provided well before I became a part of the faculty in the Department will always live in my heart. In this regard, I acknowledge Drs Elise Lake, John Sonnett and Kate O'Neil. Elise, your oatmeal-raisin cookies and John and Kate's roasted sweet potatoes with peppers stand out in my memory as symbols of the affection that the Department shares with us.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge several very special students from the University of Mississippi who cheered for me at every stage as I completed the manuscript and more importantly, provided me the honor to teach them. You provoked me to contemplate more fully issues related to the Hebrew Bible, gender, and ethnicity. You have undertaken your work as students with seriousness of purpose and in the process have made me a better thinker.

To my colleagues Drs Keith Appolis, Ken Stone and Harold V. Bennett who were first my classmates at Vanderbilt, I express great affection for and thanks to you. The three of you are more like brothers than friends. We spent hours discussing theory and texts in and out of classes; years vicariously living the others' pain and joys. Thanks to my deceased friend and brother, Rev. Leon Chestnut; I wish you had lived to see this day. And to my mentor, Dr Randall Bailey from the Interdenominational Theological Seminary, Atlanta, you are a pioneer as one of the first African-American Hebrew Bible scholars. You have invested in many of us. I owe you my abiding thanks and a solemn commitment to uplift and encourage students. I hope you and the other firsts among African-American biblical scholars will be honored by this study.

My work would have been more difficult without funding and the incredible support provided by the libraries and their staffs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Chicago, Cambridge University Library (UK), and the University of Mississippi. My special thanks to colleagues at Cambridge University's Department of Numismatics for opening private workspace and providing several documents in the collection for my perusal. Thanks to Mr Patrick Brown and Dr William Lawhead at the University of Mississippi for providing me with funding for my research trip to Cambridge University, and to Dean Glenn Hopkins at the University of Mississippi's College of Liberal Arts for awarding a 2006–2007 Summer Research Grant that was used for research on this manuscript.

I must also acknowledge my outstanding physicians at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Drs Robert McGuire, R. Kirk Mehrle, Jinna Shephard and Harriett Hampton and their respective staffs. Also, I am very grateful to Ms Jennifer Deston, my awesome physical therapist. After so many other physicians and therapists had given up, all of you in different ways made it physically possible for me to work.

I could not imagine writing an acknowledgment without expressing profound gratitude to my late mom and dad, Mildred J. and LeRoy Mathis, Sr. Thank you for giving me the joy of learning and instilling in me the courage to persevere. I am very fortunate to have two sets of parents. Thanks to my mother(-in-law) and my father(-in-law), Elizabeth and Curtis Johnson. The two of you have helped me and us through serious illnesses and very challenging times. I hope I've made the four of you proud. To my sisters, Patricia and Janet and my brothers, LeRoy, Jr, Alan, Phil and Terry—your encouraging and supportive words have been invaluable through the years.

For the two people who have lived with Ezra–Nehemiah and the intermarriage dilemma nearly as much as I have—my sweet Olivia Champion and dear partner, Dr Kirk A. Johnson, I owe an inexhaustible and unimaginable debt. Liv, you have endured far fewer hours of leisure than children your age deserve, and far too many discussions about theory. Thank you for your patience and for your unwavering belief in me. I am deeply invested in being a good example of a strong woman able to surmount life's obstacles. I appreciate the time that Dr Kirk Johnson, my very best friend, my partner in life and love, has invested in me over the years. I cannot thank you enough for your confidence and the intellectual prowess that you have shared with me. Thank you for nursing me to health multiple times and for helping me to negotiate life's difficulties over the past years. You, more than anyone else, know what it has taken for me to finish this project. I am grateful beyond all words for your presence in my life.

My thanks to all of the scholars who critiqued my presentation of first ideas at the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Conference in Philadelphia, and the many who have thoughtfully commented on Ezra–Nehemiah over the past centuries. You have lived in my head year after year, forcing me to sharpen my arguments and analyses of Ezra 9–10. Even my best attempts miss perfection. For all of the mistakes, problems, or miscues manifest in the work I wholly accept responsibility.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This is a narratological analysis of the interethnic marriage dilemma in Ezra–Nehemiah. The study is grounded within a framework of sociological, anthropological and critical theories. These disciplines help to inform the function of the text and formulate a context for understanding the cultural issues at stake in it. One way this new inquiry into Ezra–Nehemiah will develop is through an alternative strategy for producing knowledge, one that values the insights of a post-civil rights era African–American woman, without dismissing out of hand the contributions to Ezra–Nehemiah studies from other, more traditional, perspectives. The wider implications for reading the biblical text in this fashion requires reconsidering the premises for Hebrew Bible interpretation that have been assumed with few questions until recently. This tradition, steeped in a limited set of assumptions about the purposes and function of the Hebrew Bible, has largely ignored all but a few interpretative models. These ways of knowing have been so deeply embedded into modern interpretations of the Hebrew Bible as to ignore or perhaps misinterpret the most salient cultural features of texts such as Ezra 9–10.

To adequately analyze intermarriage as a multidimensional dynamic, circumstances surrounding the exile from which the people of Yehud were returning must be explored. Thus, this macro-level analysis of Ezra–Nehemiah considers the multifaceted intermarriage dilemma by examining several significant interrelated matters concerning ethnicity, social class, gender, and sexuality. The investigation into Yehud's economic environment during the Achaemenid era is largely supported by theoretical suppositions elaborated upon by Immanuel Wallenstein, Christopher Chase-Dunn, and other proponents of World Systems theory. This analysis also examines the trauma caused by the experience of exile; the importance of ethnicity to cohesion and group-identity formation in the postexilic Yehudite community; the economic toll of the exile caused by returning to the land over which Yehudites no longer had autonomy; and the consequences of interethnic marriage with foreigners to the entire social structure of Yehud.

Several other important issues must be highlighted. To hypothesize about the ways in which the small venue that was Yehud may have operated as a part of the larger Achaemenid Empire, it is important to establish Yehud's pre- and postexilic social structure. More specifically, the roles of Jewish and foreign women who are the joint subjects of the intermarriage dilemma must be studied in relationship to the overall social structure and economy of Yehud. Aspects of the Hebrew Bible that relate to marriage, family, property rights, and other analysis by Hebrew Bible scholars can help to illuminate the social structure.

I argue that political dominance by the Persian Empire triggered or contributed to a range of issues related to identity. Indeed, few matters in the Hebrew Bible better reveal identity concerns faced during the Achaemenid period than does the dispute regarding intermarriage chronicled in Ezra–Nehemiah. To understand fully the method and resultant study, it is vital to first outline the history of critical biblical scholarship. This provides a means for understanding the interdisciplinary method employed in this study, but more importantly, for showing how non-dominant interests may give rise to questions which necessitate alternative types of investigation of the biblical text.

Why is it vital to discuss historical interpretation and methodological concerns within the larger context of the Hebrew Bible generally and Ezra–Nehemiah in particular? Before the early to mid-1990s, few studies examined ethnicity in Ezra–Nehemiah. Initially, one of my primary reasons for analyzing this ancient text was to attempt to understand the context from which the intermarriage dilemma emerged. Within contemporary studies, few biblical scholars have investigated whether the text had racial implications (Clines 1984: 117-18). Yet, in the United States today, Ezra is quoted regularly by white American Christians as support for racist behavior—to argue against interethnic and interracial marriage, or ‘race-mixing’. Pragmatically, it is important to understand whether the origins of this interpretation of Ezra–Nehemiah are plausible. If they are not, what context could motivate such an understanding of the text? In any case, what ancient context could have contributed to the edict against intermarriage?

As a whole, then, the study seeks to provide a plausible retroactive hypothesis that addresses these questions. It is as important to note the social climate in Europe and the United States during the development of critical biblical scholarship as it is to understand the ancient context.

Biblical studies privileges works that are developed along a historical axis. One example is studies that utilize historical critical methods and related interpretative tools, such as textual criticism. Implicit in the understanding of a historical analysis is the assumption that the resulting work is necessarily transparent and void of interpretation (van Alpen 1997: 78). On this basis, historical analyses in any number of academic disciplines are granted the top position on the hierarchy of analytical methods.

The proclivity toward scholarship featuring historical methodologies in biblical studies is, in part, the result of purportedly ‘scientific’ understandings of the world and alternative ways of defining history, which began to surface c. 1650 with the drive towards western industrialization. Notably, Galileo's heliocentric view of the earth, Darwin's Theory of Evolution, and Newton's studies on gravity lessened the need to view life's origins mythically. Historians were no longer compelled to explain political affairs in a manner that favored a particular country's perspective. Clearly, science had moved to the fore, replacing, in many instances, metaphysical views of the origins of life. The movement toward accuracy in the study of history and defining events without deference to state agendas proved to play an important role in reassessing what constitutes history. Historians, philosophers, theologians and other scholars, including Johann Gottfried Herder and Leopold von Ranke, played pivotal roles in re-establishing this new concept of history (Liebel 1971). Von Ranke, in particular, described history as the 'value free' objective reporting of human events. Gavin Langmuir notes how historians have since moved away from the Rankean perspective, but von Ranke's positivistic tradition has had a stranglehold on biblical scholarship since its inception (Langmuir 1990).

During the sixteenth century, the Protestant Church was developing its foundation in contrast to Catholicism. By the seventeenth century, millions of Africans were enslaved in the 'New World', and throughout Europe, the Caribbean, and South America. Millions of Native Americans had lost their lands—and their lives—to conquering Europeans (cf. Kidd 2006). By the eighteenth century, contentious race relations were underway. Biological theories of racial inferiority were offered as a justification for slavery, and to support anti-African and anti-Semitic views. This is the context that gave rise to modern critical biblical scholarship, the results of which neither Jews nor Christians accepted readily, at least not initially.

At the turn of the twentieth century, critical biblical scholarship was more palatable to some Reform rabbis and Christian scholars, albeit for very different reasons. The Reformers began to treat the Bible as literature that captured the human experience (Cohen 1984). Christians, however, rejected theories such as Julius Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis and other so-called scientific findings, such as Darwin's Theory of Evolution. These notions were perceived as threats to Christian theology, a point that will be considered below (Cohen 1984: 124). That many of the early Jewish Reformers first accepted critical scholarship in part, so as not to be more alienated from Christians than they already were, is a significant indication of the hardship faced by Jews at the hand of Christians (Cohen 1984). Eventually, under the leadership of Kaufmann Kohler and Emil Hirsch, the Reform Jews' view of critical scholarship was placed within the context of a broader understanding of Judaism as a national faith tradition, an idea that was at odds with Enlightenment goals (Cohen 1984: 129).

As for Christians, many who embraced ‘higher criticism’ were treated as outcasts if not heretics (Cohen 1984). For example, Julius Wellhausen was forced to resign his position at the University of Greifswald because his colleagues disagreed with his analytical position on the Hebrew Bible (Momigliano 1982: 49). In 1885, as professor at Marburg, Wellhausen was even denied the opportunity to deliver lectures on the Christian Old Testament. Over time, Wellhausen’s theory became less controversial. However, critics raised two contingent matters. Christian scholars expressed criticism about the Documentary Hypothesis, leading to the establishment of alternative theories concerning the relationship between ancient Israelite culture and religions from other parts of the ancient Near East (Anon 1908: 155). Eventually, as Jewish Reformers claimed the Hebrew Bible as an integral part of Judaism, their views were disparaged by Christians, who tried to bolster the foundational role of the Hebrew Bible in Christianity while diminishing its significance for Judaism. In response, Jewish scholars identified this assessment by Christian scholars as ‘intellectual or philosophical anti-Semitism’ (Cohen 1984: 149-50).

Throughout the history of biblical interpretation, many segments of society, including Jewish people, have been excluded from meaningful mainstream discourse on the Hebrew Bible. Christians began to develop negative imagery and texts about Jews as early as the second century CE Canon Law, artistic depictions, and a series of anti-Jewish activities throughout Europe played a crucial role in Christian perceptions of Jewish people and Judaism. Jews were charged with blood libel (e.g., 1144, William of Norwich), accused of embracing non-Christian views (e.g., 1248 Talmud Burnings, Paris), and in the fourteenth century blamed for the Black Plague (Byrne 2004; Ziegler 1969: 100-103). Immediately after the Reformation, Martin Luther harbored ideations that Jews would convert to Christianity. When it became clear that they would not, Luther unleashed an onslaught of anti-Jewish commentaries. Ironically, Jewish thinkers and rabbis were exploited frequently for their knowledge of Tanakh (Manuel 1992). For example, when interdenominational quarrels about the meaning of the Hebrew Bible broke out, Protestants, who lacked the expertise necessary to translate Classical Hebrew, made despised rabbis the arbiters of the precise meaning of a passage (Manuel 1992: 56-57). With this exception, biblical scholarship from as far back as the 1500s was limited to European, American, Catholic, and Protestant male authors. Therefore, little is known about how other ethnic groups and women might view the biblical text. Additionally, it is not apparent that scholars discussed the role of Judaism in the study of Hebrew Scripture except to the extent that Christians expressed varying degrees of disdain for Jews and Judaism. With the exception of *The Women’s Bible* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and perspectives on the biblical text that may be gleaned from contexts such as sermons, the voices of Africans and other nonwhite groups were systematically omitted from discourse on the Bible. There are two equally important points: first, nonwhite and female voices were absent from the construction of the theoretical developments that became the basis for historical critical scholarship and other early methodologies for analyzing the Hebrew Bible. Second, men who formulated the fundamental theories and systems of knowledge about the Hebrew Bible—the basis upon which analytical tools were created—expressed hostility toward these excluded groups. When such narrow perspectives form the foundational premises for critical biblical scholarship, how can members of the outlying groups accept and utilize these tools as if they are transparent and without ideological bias?

Historical biblical critical scholarship has its roots in theologies, models, and legacies developed by scholars from Europe between the Protestant Reformation and after the period known as the Enlightenment (Liebel 1971: 359-85; Wallis 1918). Based on perspectives expressed by these men, there is little wonder that nonwhite, non-Christian ethnic groups and women were omitted from scholarly debate. During this same period, most of the pillars of western civilization, including Immanuel Kant, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, and David Hume considered African-Americans and Native Americans to be subhuman, and at best, incapable of higher thought (cf. also, McCown 1956: 14). For example, David Hume, in his essay entitled ‘O National Character’, made the following remarks about Africans:

> I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartans, have still something eminent about them, in their valor, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men [*sic*]. Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; tho’ low people, without education, will start out amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA indeed they talk of one negro as a man of parts and learning; but ‘tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly (Hume 1875: 252).

Hume, ‘the most important philosopher ever to write in English’, was not the only eminent scholar to attribute such base characteristics to people of African descent (Morris 2008). In *Observations of the Beautiful and Sublime*, Immanent Kant describes the aspirations and abilities of African peoples:

> The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling… So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color. The religion of fetishes so widespread among them is perhaps idolatry that sinks as deeply into the trifling as appears to be possible to human nature. A bird feather, a cow's horn, a conch shell, or any other common object, as soon as it becomes consecrated by a few words, is an object of veneration and of invocation in swearing oaths. The blacks are very vain but in the Negro's way, and so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with thrashings (Kant 1960: 111-12).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who once wrote, 'I think I have shown that man is naturally good', ironically was part owner of a slave company. Though he acknowledged that civilization was a corrupting influence that encouraged people to exploit their neighbors, he did not condemn the enslavement of Africans (Rousseau 1754). Indeed, in Bernardin de Saint Pierre's account, Rousseau never mentioned African slavery 'except to joke about it' (Cook 1936: 294). Apparently, Rousseau dismissed human bondage as insufficiently problematic to merit mention (Cook 1936). Rousseau's knowledge of Africans was dependent largely upon travelogues that he had read, and limited contact with people of African descent. Yet like many of his contemporaries, he defined Africans as savages, writing flatly, 'Negroes…do not have the intellect of Europeans' (Cook 1936: 299).

Thus Rousseau's works expressed theoretical positions at odds with slavery, but praxis was lacking. For example, Rousseau affirmed that no group has the innate right to enslave another. But he rationalized the existence of slavery by blaming Africans for their own oppression, thereby absolving Europeans: 'Force made the first slaves, *their cowardice* has perpetuated the institution' (emphasis mine) (Cook 1936: 301). Mercer Cook argues that Rousseau's perspectives on slavery were not 'a racial phenomenon'. However, it is difficult to reconcile Rousseau's statements about who and what Africans were without concluding that his views, regardless of his intent, were racist.

These and other figures important to the development of biblical hermeneutics, including Georg W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche and Julius Wellhausen, also expressed openly anti-Semitic views (Gilman 1985; Holub 1995) (Duffy and Willard 1988;). Bonnie G. Smith argues convincingly that the development of concepts such as history, upon which the 'new scientific' biblical scholarship was formed, was gendered (Smith 1995: 1150-70). Other major theoretical perspectives, including Auguste Comte's distillation of positivism, appear to express social-class biases (Comte 1868; Hartung 1945).

The purpose for elaborating these scholarly perspectives is to emphasize the relationship between the productions of knowledge on the one hand, and the power structures in Western culture which are responsible for it on the other. Western culture has strongly influenced the development of biblical interpretation. As an African–American woman born in a culture invested for centuries in the slavery of Africans and which utilized Ezra 9–10 as a racialist and racist argument against interethnic marriage, I believe it is essential to note the ways in which produced knowledge may dominate the discourse by investing in notions of stereotyping and Othering as a means to establish and maintain a status quo (Williams 1994: 8). My goal is not to denigrate traditional biblical interpretation but to contextualize it as one of many means of analyzing a biblical text. The underlying assumption is that, like every interpretative technique, it reflects the interests of those who employ it.

Biblical Text through (An)Other's Eyes

Traditional scholarship rarely considers that the Bible may represent something other than literal history, or that history is multifaceted. The urge to view the Bible as history may be even more prevalent when a text appears to be buttressed by archaeological evidence. When interpreters have a vested interest in the text, it is far easier to seek out certain facts to support a thesis and not others. This is not to say that the biblical text is without truth. But an attempt to prove beyond a reasonable doubt whether any past event actually happened, or happened in a certain way, reflects at best a perspective, one no different than say, a feminist analysis of a text. For example, even if the event in question was witnessed by several people, each person is likely to view the events through a particular lens, one that accounts for not only past individual experiences but cumulative cultural experiences.

For a reminder of how a single event can hold vastly different meanings, we need only recall the aftermath of the 1995 verdict announcement in the criminal trial of Orenthal James Simpson. Simpson, of course, was found innocent of murdering his ex-wife and her male friend. Most white Americans, convinced that Simpson had literally gotten away with murder, saw the verdict as a miscarriage of justice. Most black Americans, aware of how the criminal justice apparatus has penalized African-American males disproportionately, saw the verdict as a victory in the face of an historically unjust system. The point here is not whether Simpson actually committed the murders. Against the backdrop of an unsettled and bitter legacy of racial animus in America, the evidence supplied by the prosecution and the defense seem to have mattered less than did the very personal contexts that different observers brought to their understanding of the case. The same is true for the jury. In such trials, American juries are asked to decide whether the evidence establishes the defendant's guilt beyond a *reasonable doubt*. Here again, culturally shaped perspectives and experiences can be powerful contributing factors when juries decide reasonableness. Because evidence may be read in different ways depending upon the sociopolitical backgrounds of the jury members, a verdict may in fact have little bearing on the defendant's actual innocent or guilt. Simpson's acquittal does not establish as fact his actual innocence. It means simply that the jury's opinion on the relative strength of the two arguments, one against Simpson and one supporting him, was for one moment in time unanimous.

Similarly, to analyze the Hebrew Bible, we must reassess the best way to understand history and religion. While Leopold von Ranke argued that it was the scholar's task to omit one's views in lieu of paraphrasing words and ideas of the people being analyzed, Gavin Langmuir provides an alternative perspective. Langmuir writes:

> By describing what religion was thought to be then without taking any position of their own interpretation of the problem or what it really was or is, historians [could] preserve their impartiality, leaving it up to their readers to interpret the historical record as they wish (Langmuir 1990: 3).

Langmuir argues that claims of objectivity in articulating histories are overstated. In fact, he concludes that historians who discuss past religious events inevitably incorporate their own interpretations into the descriptions they provide (Langmuir 1990: 4). Therefore, Langmuir suggests that scholars identify their position in relationship to the matter being described. As scholars reckon with past failings of traditional historical critical scholarship, serious consideration must be given to how similar problems might be avoided.

There are other key considerations for understanding the Bible. Among them is whether scholars should pursue a historical reconstruction. While establishing determining factors could arguably help to develop a retroactive hypothesis, biblical scholars' seemingly endless search for origins and historical accuracy has yielded two related problems. First, some traditional theoretical positions supported putatively by archaeological material have been accepted as fact because they appear to be historically sound. On the other hand, conclusions reached by less-conventional analysis have been ignored or assigned lesser status because they do not meet some unstated, unspecified standard of scientific or historical soundness. Here again, because it is unlikely that every observer's account of a given event would coincide even if it were possible to glance backwards into antiquity to see events as they occurred, the search for origins and *real history* is futile if by history one means events that are conveyed absent interpretation and with full transparency. As Michel Foucault points out, each point of origin leads only to the quest to excavate other origins. Historicity is not the only valid standard by which a text may gain legitimacy or express meaning. Foucault argues convincingly that by examining 'facts of discourse', which include organizational principles, normative rules, and institutionalized facts, several problems posed by temporal and cultural differences and distance may be avoided (Foucault 1972: 22). Following Foucault's logic, rather than claim that conjecture equals history, it may be more profitable to develop retroactive hypotheses. To be sure, facts of discourses can reveal historical information (Foucault 1972: 22). But that is not the only result that is sought.

Identity and Analysis: Some Important Considerations

In the earliest versions of this work, I used archaeology to give veracity to the study. At the time (1998), few biblical scholars seemed interested in unconventional readings of the biblical text. As one of only two African–American women with doctoral degrees in Hebrew Bible scholarship, I felt uneasy about analyzing a biblical text too untraditionally. But I reasoned that an ideological study in tandem with anthropological support might find acceptance. Even today, to the extent that critical analytical methods has been permitted in biblical scholarship, the works are cordoned off and marginalized as 'feminist', for example. By its nature, this label implies that only mainstream biblical scholarship is real biblical scholarship, and that everything else is some lesser alternative. For Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, there is necessarily a deep interconnectedness between the contemporary critical analytical task and a scholar's recognition of the ways in which privilege, induced by gender, race, religion and class, may be inscribed into the reconstructions of biblical texts (Fiorenza 1997: 343). Schüssler Fiorenza describes her 'politics of interpretation' as follows:

> In short, such a politics of interpretation seeks to analyze the nexus between re-constructions of the historical Jesus and those theoretical, historical, cultural, and political conceptual frameworks that shape Jesus research. Hence, biblical scholarship, as I have argued elsewhere, must understand itself as a critical rhetorical practice. It must carefully explore and assess its own impregnation with hegemonic knowledges and discursive frameworks that make 'sense' of the world and produce what counts as 'reality' or as 'common sense' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1997: 344).

Here Schüssler Fiorenza grasps a concept apparently lost by many biblical scholars. Most mainstream scholars do not accept responsibility for their hermeneutical stances, and the ways in which their ideological positions are imbued with positivism. At the same time, they denigrate as 'subjectivist' critical approaches such as feminist interpretations, ideological analyses, and postcolonial perspectives, implying that only traditional exegetical strategies are acceptable. One manifestation of this denigration is the apparent dismissal of nontraditional works by premier journals in the field, as evidenced by low acceptance rates. Implicit in this marginalization is the assumption that an ideological analysis, for example, cannot be as relevant or as valuable as one of the more traditional methods even if a growing number of biblical scholars are interested in these more–diverse ways of analyzing the biblical text. Regarding New Testament scholarship and reconstructions of Jesus specifically, Schüssler Fiorenza makes an observation that also applies generally to biblical scholarship:

> The politics of meaning requires that any presentation of Jesus, scientific or otherwise, must own that it is a 're-construction'… Such reconstructions are valuable not only for how much they can account for the present textual and archaeological information…[and the] sociopolitical contexts, but also for whether they are able to inquire into the rhetorical interests and theological functions of historical knowledge productions (Fiorenza 1997: 345).

Schüssler Fiorenza's comments help to substantiate this study. When I began this inquiry into Ezra 9–10, most scholars had chosen not to interrogate several aspects of the text. Within this group of mostly white male academics, matters pertinent to social class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity had been uninvestigated and perhaps deemed irrelevant. When I presented my analysis of Ezra 9–10 at the 1995 meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, many such audience members openly and vigorously disputed my rendering of the text. They warned that one must 'be careful about the way the text is being translated' (Johnson 1995). Upon reflection, it occurred to me that these dissenters were questioning more than my facility with Hebrew. They were concerned about whether the text would be handled in concert with the prevailing dominant fiction. Their attempt to stifle difference made clear that these biblical scholars, at least, had developed parameters for establishing meaning. Their expressed doubt about my ability to translate even the most rudimentary vocabulary in Classical Hebrew implied that anyone who would translate עבד as 'slave' rather than 'servant' is *almost but not quite* equipped to function as a biblical scholar. More significantly, the comments exposed a longstanding rupture in the discourses among biblical scholars who utilize different methodological approaches. Cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha, who writes about why persons in dominant positions seem to need to control the discourse, explains how ideological positions are linked to assumptions about legitimacy:

> It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double that many instances of colonial imitation come. What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence. By 'partial' I mean both 'incomplete' and 'virtual.' It is as if the very emergence of the 'colonial' is dependent for its representation upon some *strategic limitation or prohibition* [emphasis mine] within the authoritative discourse itself (Bhabha 1994: 86).

Because meaning has been delimited by traditionalist interpreters, it is distant with respect to those who do not share the dominant fantasy. This remoteness makes interpretations of the biblical text inaccessible to those who are not a part of the dominant culture and do not share the prevailing fantasy. Perhaps more important, the limited way of interpreting the biblical text defined and inscribed by the dominant culture *fixes* meaning illegitimately. This in turn, closes off the fullness of meanings available to a variety of peoples (Bal 2001: 7). Both Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg affirm the association between dominance and legitimacy. Hall writes:

> The meaning of a cultural form and its place or position in the cultural field is not inscribed inside its form. Nor is its position fixed once and forever. This year's radical symbol or slogan will be neutralized into next year's fashion; the year after, it will be the object of a profound cultural nostalgia (Hall 1981).

Importantly, Grossberg asserts that even the dominant position is inscribed with ideology:

> It is the struggle to articulate certain codes into a position of dominance, to legitimate their claim, not only to define the meaning of cultural forms but to define the relation of that meaning (and hence, the text) to reality as one of representation, that defines the specificity of the ideological. That is, ideological practices entail a double articulation of the signifier, first to a web of connotation (signification) and second, to real social practices and subject-positions (representation) (Grossberg 1996).

Grossberg writes further:

> Ideological practices are those through which particular relations, particular chains of equivalences, are 'fixed', 'yoked together'. They construct the necessity, the naturalness, the 'reality' of particular identifications and interpretations (and of course, the simultaneous exclusion of others as fantastic, contingent, unnatural or biased) (Grossberg 1996: 158-59).

Thus, while criticism of my analysis at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting implied that the study undertaken was subjective and therefore illegitimate, Grossberg's analysis asserts that ideology is inscribed into the dominant position as well (Grossberg 1996: 158-59). Even the dominant fantasy is imbued with a particular perspective, *an ideology*. All interpretations of Ezra 9–10, whether developed by historical critical methods or ideological analyses, represent points of view. To embrace an ideological analysis by utilizing narratology does not imply that this type of study is by its nature inherently free-wheeling and less analytical or more unstructured than any other exegetical approach. In fact, Mieke Bal, the architect of the narratological framework adapted for the present work, argues vociferously to the contrary (Bal 2001: 7).

I acknowledge that meaning can emerge by embracing a framework in which facts of discourse are analyzed alongside other reflexive categories which may or may not be intrinsic, autochthonous, and universally recognizable (Foucault 1972: 22). This is significant because it allows pre-existing forms of continuity which are established and entrenched in biblical scholarship to be held in abeyance. By suspending the forms of continuity, the basis for questions posed to the text is free from that which may have appeared to be 'virtually self-evident' (Foucault 1972: 26). Thus, methodological analyses and results are freed from that which is self-evident and purportedly already understood.

Ezra–Nehemiah presents what some consider a historical portrayal of Yehudite repatriation following King Cyrus's victory over the Babylonians c. 539 BCE. Two problems can emerge with the Ezra story when it is portrayed as history. Strictly speaking, 'history' is a relatively new category while the events described in Ezra–Nehemiah are ensconced in antiquity (Foucault 1972). This all but eliminates the notion of reaching backwards for origins. However, it does not negate the value of information which may come from the Achaemenid context. Several organizational principles deviate from history *per* se, but make possible a rich understanding of Ezra 9–10. Thus, where archaeological material pertinent to the Achaemenid Empire is useful as a part of this retroactive hypothesis, it is employed, though it is not weighted more heavily than other parts of the discussion.

Methodologically, the text may be analyzed effectively by employing narrative theory and semiotics. At the text's core resides an intricate nexus of multidimensional events, actors, as well as temporal and locative relationships. These sequentially linked events parallel other ancient narrative contexts within the Hebrew Bible. I highlight these parallels. Additionally, narratives that describe peoples in similar circumstances to those in Ezra 9–10 are evident within contemporary societies. Where these unities are manifest, my goal is 'to study their internal configuration or secret configurations' to realize meaning (Foucault 1972: 26).

In this work on Ezra–Nehemiah, intermarriage, and the trauma of exile, the major goal is to examine the events and relationships among agents against the backdrop of exile, repatriation, and kinship. Kinship is the linchpin that drew together the relational and situational dynamics of identity for Yehudites. Notions of kinship were expressed during the postexilic period in the בית אבות ('fathers' house), the pre-eminent social structure which developed first in Israel's earliest days. Early studies on the בית אבות, and to a lesser degree ethnicity in Hebrew Bible, neglected to discuss fully the interstices formed by ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality in the intermarriage problem expressed in Ezra (Killebrew 2005; Gottwald 1979; Stager 1985; Lemche 1985; Meyers 1988; Smith 1987; Weinberg 1992; Smith 1989; Smith-Christopher 1994).

Ezra 9–10 as a narrative has three layers—a narrative text, story, and fabula. Each layer is capable of revealing and distilling some aspect of what the writers and editors were conveying. The constituent parts of the fabula '…are organized in a certain way into a story. Their arrangement in relation to one another is such that they can produce the effect desired' (Bal 2001: 7). In this vein, a narratological analysis can render useful and important information. This type of study does not presuppose that the narrative under scrutiny is historical. But by disassembling the narrative temporarily, it is possible to analyze the effects that the three layers are capable of revealing to the reader (Bal 1985: 6-7). Because the primary goal is *not* to recover ancient history as such, the findings act as mechanisms to give guidance for establishing meaning within a postcolonial environment. Thus, Ezra 9–10 may impart perspectives and ideologies independently of what may have happened in a specific historical instance.

In the Chapters that follow, I make the case for understanding interethnic marriage as an interrelated multidimensional dynamic. In Chapter 1, I define key terms such as exile, trauma, purity and ethnicity as a prelude to presenting the underlying hypothesis of the study: the injunction against interethnic marriage in Ezra 9–10 is not so much a warning against race-mixing in the modern segregationist sense of the term, but a response to a complex confluence of economic, ethnic, gender- and class-related, and sexual concerns that emerged in the aftermath of the trauma of exile and the reconstruction of the identity of Yhwh's chosen people in their former land. Attention then turns to a summary of the Persian Empire and the role that Yehud may have played in the Achaemenid Empire. This Chapter offers information to help make clear the economic and sociopolitical dynamics that may have been at play in the Achaemenid context. Again, here the goal is to draw analogies and formulate conclusions based on organizational principles and with the aid of social anthropology. I use archaeological evidence describing the Achaemenid Empire to help develop this hypothesis.

In Chapter 2, I strengthen the case for why the ban on interethnic marriage reflects an interconnected dynamic borne of deep economic distress.

Chapter 3 is devoted to analyzing the economic implications of marriage and interethnic marriage in the Hebrew Bible and the Elephantine papyrus.

Chapter 4 explicates methodological implications of the proposed anthropological and the narratological-ideological readings followed by these readings of Ezra 9–10.

Chapter 5 briefly explores why these results may be deemed important to national identity in the United States particularly but western civilizations generally. The reading is *interested* but it is not biased.

The history of biblical interpretation is an overarching concern that echoes throughout the study. Modern historical biblical scholarship has always been enmeshed with theories of race, religion, gender, class, and sexuality that promote certain androcentric conceptions of the world. It is as essential to evaluate these, as it is to analyze thoroughly the intermarriage dilemma in Ezra–Nehemiah.

Chapter 2

EXILE, TRAUMA, ETHNICITY AND PURITY: KEYS TO INTERMARRIAGE

There are four keys to unlocking an understanding of the intermarriage dilemma described in Ezra 9–10. First, terminology and concepts must be outlined. Second, gender and race must be discussed as non-essential, socially constructed concepts. Third, an analysis of the larger Achaemenid Empire and the context in which the dilemma surfaced must be presented. Fourth, an understanding of marriage as a paradigm emergent from the בית אבות must be outlined and critiqued. From these terms and concepts, the complex multidimensional problematic presented in the intermarriage dilemma is emblematic of a larger dynamic functioning in ancient Yehud. The intermarriage dilemma establishes that identity issues and the results of exile rather than rampant racialist or racist concerns motivated the mandate against interethnic marriage.

At this juncture, attention is turned to—exile, trauma, purity, and ethnicity. These are among the most important words utilized throughout the course of the study. These concepts when considered fully are capable of extracting the underlying concerns presented in Ezra 9–10. Therefore, by grasping these definitions, the contours of the larger work are made clear. What makes the book of Ezra–Nehemiah continuously engaging and relevant is that at every turn and stage in the Book, opportunities arise to introduce or reiterate major points in new ways. For contemporary interpreters, Ezra–Nehemiah makes possible the exploration of several germane matters because the intermarriage dilemma is a multidimensional phenomenon which poses questions related to gender, sexual, economic, and religious issues. In antiquity, if not racial concerns, certainly issues of ethnic difference presented considerable stress for early Jewish communities. Hermeneutically, however, racial matters emerge especially with respect to considerations of modern people emergent from either a postcolonial or postslavery contexts.

The ostensibly mundane issue of defining terminology, then, is transformed into opportunities to elaborate on the connections between the elements named. Whereas defining the terms delimits the range of meanings for the balance of the study it undergirds the thesis in vital ways also.

Exile and Trauma

To develop a plausible model for understanding interethnic marriage and the constituent contributing social and political forces responsible for shaping intermarriage as described in the book of Ezra, the effects of exile must be considered. There are two key anthropological perspectives that may enable analyses of displaced populations to be understood—the emic and etic perspectives. Proponents of the emic view claim that cultures are knowable best by those who function within them. This viewpoint embraces the 'psychological studies of folk beliefs and cultural anthropologists' striving to understand culture from the "native's point of view"' (Morris 1999: 781). Scholars who extol the etic perspective assert that a culture may be understood and characterized externally. Therefore, it is possible to draw generalizations about the group that is under scrutiny (Harris 1979; Morris 1999: 781). The latter approach is aligned closely with B.F. Skinner's behaviorist psychology; and cultural relativism including environmental factors such as economic, ecological, or other antecedent circumstances that are not necessarily important to the inside community (Morris 1999: 781). Opponents of this methodology argue that outsiders are not privy to the insiders' knowledge and thus, are prone to make incorrect cross-cultural generalizations.

Liisa Malkki, who takes the emic perspective, argues that many scholars who study displaced groups utilize models which assume that all exiled peoples experience identical stages (Malkki 1995: 508). Among the assumptions made are the following: scholars presume that displacement is equated with a series of problems; most of which are linked to 'questions of identity, culture, ethnicity and "tradition"' (Malkki 1995: 508). Malkki claims rightly that transportation across national boundaries is not necessarily tantamount to transformation of identities, cultures, ethnicities or tradition(s) of displaced peoples (Malkki 1995: 508). Similarly, the claim that all displaced entities suffer psychologically due to exile is not necessarily a fact applicable to all communities which have been displaced. However, the greater point is that within seemingly universal experiences, particularities exist and are important to observe when possible and accessible. But to the extent that Persian Yehud is an ancient culture, the distance created by time makes it impossible to know entirely all of the intimate details experienced by the community. The closest witnesses available about the Persian Yehudite context are biblical texts. The Aramaic papyri from Elephantine give us relevant data about a Jewish colony; and the Greek writers inform about events in the Empire from yet another perspective. None of these are equivalent to having direct access to the entire community's diverse responses which would be available if Yehud were a contemporary culture.

Moreover, theoretically, the emic approach is most appealing because implicit in that model is privilege accorded to the 'insiders'—those who created and lived the culture daily. In turn, that might retard the proliferation and establishment of arrogant and patronizing views about the culture. But given the inability to analyze an ancient culture and the lack of insider information for the current study, the etic perspective is employed. Generalizations emergent from other exilic or displaced communities give guidance and important clues for constructing a hypothesis about Persian Yehud. They provide a framework for understanding not only what may have happened but give guidance for how the available data from Yehud may be understood. This conceptualization of employing current studies of displaced peoples to understand an ancient exilic context is not unique. Barry Stein affirms that modern 'ideological refugees' are valid resources for discussing the same ancient religious context that is the subject of this study (Stein 1981: 330).

Thus, while Kenneth Pike asserts that the outsiders' view or 'etic data [provides] access into the [social] system—the starting point of analysis—the circumstances created by historical distance make it logical to reverse Pike's theoretical position. Thus, rather than look to the particular to develop generalizations, the broader contours of generalizations formed based on information about various exilic contexts are used here to help establish an understanding of Yehud's particular situation (Harris 1979). Wherever evidence makes it possible to insert particular features based on archaeological, biblical or other historical data, that will be done. The goal is to develop the fullest, most plausible and intelligible hypothesis concerning human responses to exile possible (Mujcinovic 2003; Malkki 1996; Barudy 1989; Malkki 1995; Majodina 1989; Ball 2000).

The exile of ancient people of Judah by the Babylonians in 586 BCE formulates the basis and background for the narrative in Ezra–Nehemiah. In Ezra 1, King Cyrus makes provisions for the exiled Yehudites to return to Yehud in c. 539 BCE. Gold was among the gifts he contributed towards the fund to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple which had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

Liisa Malkki argues that psychological or psycho-social trauma is not necessarily attributable to all displaced communities (Malkki 1995: 508-509). But postexilic biblical literature supports the perspective that Persian Yehud suffered tremendously as a result of both the exile and its aftermath. Malkki asserts that movement across a national boundary is not sufficient to cause psycho-social trauma. Here it is argued not that the act of moving across national boundaries *per se* caused despair in Yehud. The larger problem was caused by the fact that they were forced to leave this special land-gift; and then after returning to it; they were forced to confront their homeland without autonomy over it.

If the concomitant results of exile were responsible for the trauma in Persian Yehud, in what ways did the Temple's destruction and the people's separation from the land-gift contribute to the trauma experienced? The land was at the heart of Yehud and its people remaining viable. It was a major part of this people's economic stability—and their identity. Even though some remained in the land and others returned, neither they nor their descendants had control over the land. Without autonomy, several stressors were exerted on the entire social system. Therefore, although King Cyrus provided some economic contributions for the returnees, the majority still faced severe economic distress and disadvantage without the land under their auspices. Without economic viability readily available, Yehudite men were confronted with major life considerations. One of these included whether transgressing social boundaries for individual economic prosperity was a suitable response. Therefore, intimately tied to land and economic survival, gender and ethnic concerns increased. Ezra 9–10 notes that Yehudite men married foreign women. While there is no indication in the biblical text as to who these foreign women were, circumstances of the Empire with respect to Egypt and the location of the Beyond the River Province, make plausible the notion that marriage to Persian women by Yehudite men for autonomy over tracts of land, and in exchange for Yehudite military service on behalf of the Empire along a troubled border, is a reasonable suggestion concerning what may have occurred. Embedded in these presuppositions are several assumptions that will be detailed further below. For now, suffice it to say that such a symbiotic relationship between the Empire and a few Yehudites would account for not only what Ezra portrays as the intermarriage dilemma but the social mechanisms that were disturbed as a result of it.

Scholars of several disciplines write about exile. Fatima Mujcinovic, a Latina feminist literary critic, writes about the Latino-Latina refugees who are dislocated inside the United States (Mujcinovic 2003: 167-68). Concerning these exiled populations, Mujcinovic notes the broken nature of exiled peoples and the dissonance they experience. She writes: 'The effects of such massive relocations are typically experienced as a psychological rupture that inevitably problematizes the articulation of individual and collective subjectivity' (Mujcinovic 2003: 168). Because the relationship between the people and the land was so vital to Yehud, it is argued that this land–people relationship formed the premises for the collective Yehudite subjectivity (Malkki 1995: 496). At this juncture, attention is turned to how trauma is constituted as a result of injured subjectivity.

Trauma and its Aftermath

Robert Jay Lifton, a physician and scholar who has studied Hiroshima, the Holocaust and other modern large-scale atrocities, sets forth the parameters of trauma in an interview conducted by Cathy Caruth. According to Lifton, individuals and groups organize their views of trauma based on their ability to engage death. Formulated on Freud's claim that fear of death is displaced castration anxiety, and Eric Erickson's view of image and meaning distilled in his dream analysis, Lifton developed the notion that trauma is the inability to cope properly or effectively with death, loss, or separation (Caruth 1995). Trauma, he argues, is the internal brokenness experienced by individuals and groups in response to tremendous pressures created by death, loss, or separation such as exile. The inward and unconscious [struggle] with how to cohere, absorb and confront, to some extent, what one has been exposed to or had thrust upon oneself [or one's group] constitutes trauma (Caruth 1995: 137). For Lifton, symbolization replaces the Freudian concept of instinct (Caruth 1995: 134). Images are important to Lifton's conceptualization of trauma because human experience is inseparable from imagery. If an atrocity occurs, the individual or group must be able to confront the loss or separation to deal with it (Caruth 1995: 131, 133). Thus, even as Freud dealt with death secondarily to sexuality, nevertheless he engaged the matter (Caruth 1995: 131). The ability to 'open and close'—engage and disengage—is essential to determining whether or not death, loss, or separation devastates or creates survivorship. Freud's limited engagement, then, is perceived as emblematic of the ability to confront yet close off the trauma. This notion of closing off is equivalent to *numbness*. To some degree, then, while engaging or confronting the traumatic event(s), one must be able to develop 'mastery in [the] struggle' (Caruth 1995: 135). This may be accomplished partly through the idea of disengaging appropriately. If the fear or apprehension of death overwhelms, then trauma is either avoided or the trauma will be converted too quickly.

There may be grave consequences for converting trauma too rapidly and thereby creating 'false witnesses' or 'designated victims'. The idea of 'converting' trauma instantaneously is problematic because it is equivalent to 'blocking out elements' of death, separation, or loss (Caruth 1995: 139). According to Lifton, this creates false witnesses (Caruth 1995: 138-39). In turn, these false witnesses develop designated victims—groups off of whom these parasitic creatures establish economic prosperity and the psychological sense of worth (Caruth 1995: 139). Lifton cites as examples of designated victims African-Americans in the United States and Jews in Europe—peoples who are associated with 'the death taint' and denied systematically the privilege or opportunity to live (Caruth 1995: 139). The ultimate perversity expressed as a result of premature conversion is 'the need one has to impose death on others in order to reassert one's own life as an individual and a group' (Caruth 1995: 140). In Ezra's intermarriage dilemma, trauma formulates the backdrop for the events that evolve in the dilemma. It will be argued below that those who advanced their individual economic causes in lieu of traditional communal ethic are akin to those who convert trauma too quickly. Among their ‘designated victims’ were ancient Yehudite women who were left without marriage partners.

Scholars who study atrocities, survivors, displaced peoples and exile agree that the traumatic event which causes either the loss or separation is not uniform nor is it necessarily fully detrimental. In fact, it is noted that the exilic event may result in a positive outcome for those who are able to aptly respond and integrate the experience (Caruth 1995; Mujcinovic 2003; Malkki 1995).

The spatial and social displacement created by exile may result in an atmosphere of trauma which is played out in the peoples’ quest for organization out of chaos (Malkki 1995: 495). Amid the search for order, new myth emerges, particularly cosmological and etiological myth. The best examples of these myths are Genesis 1 and the Holiness Code in Leviticus. Tied to the concept of exilic trauma is a notion which is equally vital for the current study. That is an understanding of purity, the matter to which attention is now directed.

Ethnicity: A Vehicle for Economic Development

Over the past seventy-five years, anthropologists and sociologists have established several definitions of ethnicity. Each definition focuses on different aspects of the concept. Among these, the Max Gluckman school formulated a definition of ethnicity dubbed the instrumentalists’ perspective. Championed most noticeably by Abner Cohen and Fredrik Barth, the instrumentalist’s perspective of ethnicity provides a suitable starting point for constructing a view of ethnicity for this study. According to Cohen, ethnic groups coalesce due to political and economic rather than for psychological reasons (Banks 1996). Fredrik Barth, while focused on the shifting boundaries of ethnicity due to groups’ economic concerns, emphasizes agency as a part of his definition of ethnicity. Siân Jones argues:

> Irrespective of the many permutations…a conceptualization of ethnic groups as self-defining systems, and an emphasis on the fluid and situational nature of both group boundaries and individual identification has prevailed in the last two to three decades. Within this broad generic definition, the analysis of particular ethnic groups has been largely concerned with the perception and expression of group boundaries; ethnicity is considered to be a consciousness of identity vis-à-vis other groups—a ‘we’/‘they’ opposition. The incorporation of a definition of ethnic groups as self-defining systems within a theoretical framework focusing on boundary maintenance, the situational aspects of ethnic identification, and boundaries, has facilitated the analysis of the social dimensions of ethnic groups and filled the theoretical void in the analysis of inter-group relations (Jones 1997: 64).

Barth's focus on the economic and politically shifting boundaries *motivated by agency* is useful and important because it helps to explain why people who would otherwise be committed to organizing their community in one manner, such as along kinship ties, might be persuaded to adapt an alternative strategy of self-ascribed identity and definition. It will be argued that the economic concerns of Yehudites in the Achaemenid era were forged in the absence of political power over the land. However, the instrumentalists' perspective omits aspects of ethnicity that are necessary to explain fully the roles and the functions of ethnic groups in Persian Yehud. Keeping in tow Barth's view of ethnicity, Siân Jones offers that ethnicity is processual rather than stagnant. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, with whom Siân Jones agrees, writes:

> *Ethnic groups are culturally ascribed identity groups, which are based on the expression of a real or assumed shared culture and common descent* (usually through the objectification of cultural, linguistic, religious, historical and/or physical characteristics). As a *process* ethnicity involves *a consciousness of difference*, which to varying degrees, entails the reproduction and transformation of basic classificatory distinctions between groups of people who perceive themselves to be in some respect culturally distinct (Eriksen 1993: 3). The cultural differences informing ethnic categories are, to varying degrees, systematic and enduring, because they both inform modes of interaction between people of different ethnic categories, and are confirmed by that interaction; that is, ethnic categories are reproduced and transformed in the ongoing processes of social life (Jones 1997: 84, emphasis mine).

The notions of ethnicity utilized in this study were developed from various definitions which were broadened to access the entire criterion of ethnicity applicable to the ancient context. To summarize, the definition utilized here features Clifford Geertz's primordialist perspective which highlights kinship and religious concerns; Fredrik Barth's situational economic perspective which stresses agency; and the positions taken by Jones and Eriksen which highlight ethnicity as a process of social life that involves an awareness of difference. The combination of these theoretical positions is significant because together they address the complexities involved in developing 'discourses of identity' vital to analyzing Ezra–Nehemiah (Jones 1997: 72). One of the major issues is how or why intermarriage or mixed ethnic interaction(s) constitutes pollution which requires separation. Therefore, it is essential to turn attention next to matters of purity and impurity—and how the dichotomy may have been introduced as a metaphor emblematic of larger more complex concerns about identity and survival in postexilic Yehud.

Purity amidst Postexilic Conditions

According to Mary Douglas, notions of purity and pollution may express views pertinent to issues of symmetry, hierarchy, and order within the political or social order. In particular, pollution or defilement within a society may be construed as analogous to the upheaval in the social order. Therefore, sexual intimacy through the exchange of bodily fluids with the ethnic Other represents the demise of the social order. Persian Yehudite religion incorporated a system of sacrifice and ritual which functioned as the venue through which purity and defilement was portrayed and may be understood (Klawans 2001). This system has serious implications for the ways in which Yehudites were expected to behave with foreigners; how notions of exile were linked to foreignness; and how ideas of purity and pollution ultimately correlated to the re-constitution of Yehudite society. One of the major matters is the degree to which the ethnic Other is considered impure; why they were categorized as polluted; and what bearing this impurity had on larger ancient Yehud society and culture. Also, to the extent that the ethnic Other was construed as impure, an exploration of how this condition emerged is essential. Is impurity implicit in foreignness or otherness?

The laws regarding intermarriage changed drastically over the course of ancient Israelite and early Jewish history. The Deuteronomic Code dated to c. 621 BCE represents the earliest stances taken on intermarriage. In that legal code seven nations were identified from which the Israelites were forbidden to take as spouses, or to whom they were not allowed give their sons and daughters. The argument articulated against intermarriage was based on the potential religious influences that foreigners might have on God's chosen people. The biological imagery created by references to foreignness, pollution, and the impure seed constitutes racialized language seemingly. But the affiliation between foreignness and idolatry—religion—rather than foreignness as commentary on racial difference was the problem according to Ezra. Therefore, even though Ezra 9–10 raises the specter of race, the primary issues have less to do with the social construction of racial identity in late antiquity than it did with the religious allegiance to Yhwh. Based on the inference in the Deuteronomic Code, intermarriage was permissible with some ethnic groups but not others (Deut. 7.1-3). Thus, interethnic marriage was not always considered polluting. According to the pre-exilic legal code, prohibition against intermarriage between Israelites and certain groups was disallowed based on moral-religious and sociopolitical grounds (Hayes 1999: 9). However, Christine Hayes claims that tying profanation of 'the holy seed' due to intermarriage began with Ezra. This edict, Hayes claims, was exclusive and universal. She writes that the 'holy seed rationale made universal and permanent' the prohibition against interethnic marriage (Hayes 1999: 13). However, the parallel development of the ban against intermarriage in the Holiness Code and Ezra–Nehemiah mitigate against the notion that Ezra marked or started a heretofore unprecedented ban against interethnic marriage. In fact, it is more likely that in response to the exile, a reaction against interethnic marriage which took generations to emerge fully was integrated into postexilic culture. The gradual nature of the ban may be reflected in the resounding hints of delay to enact the edict against intermarriage.

Mary Douglas, in her *Purity and Danger*, was among the first scholars to provide an anthropological explanation of biblical texts emanating from postexilic biblical literature (Douglas 1966: 3). According to Douglas, purity and pollution act in two specific capacities: first, pollution influences human behavior; secondly, pollution operates to express either symmetry or hierarchy within cultures (Douglas 1966: 3). In Douglas' examination of the Holiness Code's dietary laws, the purity-pollution dichotomy is part of a symbolic system which establishes societal norms. The ban on intermarriage which was based on pollution reflects societal norms.

Liisa Malkki argues in *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* that 'cleanliness and categorical purity' were ascribed to 'the social commentary on the relations of opposition in which people found their lives embedded' (Malkki 1995: 145). In this work it is argued that purity functions as an expression of symmetry. Jacob Neusner notes when 'Jews accused Jews' of wrongdoing, the accusation was made in terms of purity (Neusner 1975: 19). Neusner writes: the symbol of purity overall bears a strikingly limited range of meanings. Impurity functioned as a metaphor for sexual fornication, idolatry, and evil deeds. On the other hand, purity acted in connection with the cult (Neusner 1975: 19). In Ezra–Nehemiah, purity explicated the grave need for the Yehudite community to reorganize and re-established its people amidst postexilic communal confusion and chaos. The language of purity and pollution distinguished Yehudites from the ethnic Other. While intermarriage appeared to be the immediate concern in the text, the larger issue is idolatry. Beneath the surface of the intermarriage issue lurks idolatry as a force of contamination to the religious and cultural norms of Yehudites according to Ezra. Ostensibly, in Ezra–Nehemiah, foreignness is a code for *difference* from Yehudite societal norms and values. At a time in which stability was perceived as a necessity for survival, protection from all foreignness must be pursued. To the extent that Yehudite men married foreign women they were violating necessary barriers of identity as well as religious values to satisfy economic goals. Interestingly, whereas women in the Hebrew Bible are depicted frequently as uncontrollable, it is men's behavior rather than women's actions that are unruly—introducing to the community a range of risks through intermarriage with foreigner women (cf. Levinson 2000: 271). Indeed, intermarriage may be equated with the impurities of sexual promiscuity—another pitfall which leads to idolatry—or separation from God and the destruction of the Yehudite community (cf. Levinson 2000: 271; *T. Reub.* 4.6-9).

Jonathan Klawans defines two types of impurity: moral and ritual. He notes that moral impurity results from activities so odious that they impose a polluted state (Klawans 1998: 393). Because interethnic marriage provides the pathway to idolatrous behaviors it was objectionable. In addition to idolatry, sexual improprieties (cf. Lev. 18) and murder were identified as moral impurities (Klawans 1998: 393-415). Such activities resulted in God's people being separated from the Temple; exiled from the land; and disrupted as a community of believers. Contextualized in this manner, the intermarriage debate underscores connections among the trauma of exile; the language of purity and pollution; ethnicity; and marriage discussed above. Ezra 9–10 reflects the connections encountered as the fledgling Yehudite community sought to re-establish its identity.

Economic viability was a catalyst for Yehudite men to seek alternative marital arrangements. Ultimately, this resulted in a complex set of responses from the community. For example, the edict against 'foreign women and their children' emerged on the one hand; on the other hand, a counterargument against the edict was voiced by some of the Levites who had married out. While never mentioned overtly in the Hebrew Bible, Yehudite women's economic needs were jeopardized necessarily by virtue of Yehudite men who married foreign women. This was a vital concern for not only these women, but their families. In these and other respects, the social implications of the intermarriage dilemma were grave. In part, the economic concerns were a practical consideration for the families and communities in the Achaemenid Empire. The intermarriage problem embodied clearly the 'Us versus Them' mentality, which typified the times seemingly. Therefore, it provides a mechanism to analyze the community at large. Inquiries must be made into the familial and social structure—its function in pre- and postexilic contexts; and how the בית אבות functioned as a part of the 'Beyond the River' satrapy and the larger Achaemenid Empire. To investigate completely the social structure of Yehud, a definition of marriage and how marriage relates to the economic issues faced in Yehud during the Achaemenid era must be elaborated.

Economic Ramifications of Marriage in Persian Yehud

It is difficult to define any ancient custom such as marriage with certainty because such traditions are not easily discussed in a universally appropriate fashion, notes Robert Parkin (Parkin 1997: 39). Stipulating this caveat, Parkin nonetheless draws the following general observations about marriage based on features found in several cultural milieus. Parkin writes:

> In the great majority of societies…[marriage] can be regarded as involving some cultural restrictions on human sexual relations, perhaps restricting access for each individual to a limited number of other individuals—not

> always just one—or some cultural direction of such access towards specific individuals… Marriages do not invariably take place between those we would regard as persons of different sex, culturally redefined in such cases (Parkin 1997: 39).

Parkin identifies several other salient features of marriage. For example, he remarks that prestations such as brideweatlth or brideprice and dowry, in the form of property transfer, are common in marriage. According to Parkin, bridewealth is an exchange initiated by the groom and his kin group (that is, his family, lineage segment, or village) to the bride's family. Bridewealth is synonymous with brideprice, although the latter is sometimes viewed as objectionable because it implies the sale of the female. Dowry, on the other hand, is the 'major prestation' which is given by the bride's family or kin to either the groom-to-be or the groom and the bride. There are cases in which the bride may exercise control of the dowry's disposal or the converse (Parkin 1997: 39). Parkin denotes further a host of technical anthropological jargon that describes a variety of marriage types. Two of the concepts to which Parkin refers—hypergamy and hypogamy—bear on how and why marriage in Ezra 9–10 can be understood somewhat differently than, say, marriage in Gen. 11.27–36.43, as analyzed by Naomi Steinberg (Steinberg 1993; Parkin 1997).

Hypergamy refers to a man marrying a woman from an affinal group of lower social status. Hypogamy describes a man marrying a woman from an affinal group of higher status. Although Parkin adds that economic and political status remains frequently unchanged following marriage, there are occasions in which status is affected. It is claimed here that economic conditions in postexilic Yehud motivated some men to consider exogamous (outside of the group) marriage as an economic necessity and part of a larger set of survival strategies designed to enhance their status. The problem, however, left Yehudite women without plausible economic protections and alternatives.

There are several issues that are key components to Yehudite self-conceptualization—class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality are among them (Johnson 1995; Olyan 2004). While all of these matters are expressed in Ezra 9–10, economic and class issues formulate the linchpin linking all of the issues together. Because the community perceived itself as economically inferior as compared to that of their Achaemenid rulers, the men of Persian Yehud, it will be argued, elected to intermarry for purposes of economic advantage. Because religious groups tend to marry endogamously (within the group), according to Parkin, the edict against intermarriage in Ezra 9–10 is an indication of the tensions concerning self- and communal identity. In this struggle, the writers of Ezra 9–10 connect intermarriage to stresses in the community because marriage is an intricate part of how the Persian Yehudite community perceives kinship. Thus, whereas

Steinberg demonstrates that descent through Terah is the most important feature characterizing the endogamous marriages in Gen. 11.27–36.43, other reasons, which are tied to self- and group-definition—such as status, perhaps—are at issue in Ezra 9–10. Since marriage is not a random act but an activity guided generally by group rules, features such as status wealth, power, and availability of potential marriage partners contribute to how marital relationships are established. In this way, the economic concerns of Yehudite men are clearly an important element in their choice of marriage partners. Additionally, although groups form rules which either limit or favor other segments of society for marital selection, an individual choice of a partner whose characteristics violate the group rules can still be accepted, and that individual can fit into the community's kinship system, if only retrospectively. The story of Ruth in the Hebrew Bible may be one such example. It is quite another matter, however, when parts of the community participates in marrying out. This is what Ezra 9–10 portrays. The fear is that this wholesale exogamy jeopardizes the community's identity and compromises its chances of survival as a group.

Identity is expressed as relational and situational phenomena in Persian Yehud; these are tied to the significance of marriage. Thus, when intermarriage emerges, questions of identity escalate. The Yehudite community had returned recently from exile and was pressed into a number of relationships with other groups based on circumstances dictated in part by the loss of their autonomy over the land, and their status as subjects. Therefore, their economic viability was unsteady at best.

Chapter 3

THE POSTEXILIC SOCIOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTS IN PERSIAN YEHUD

The Book of Ezra recounts a scenario in which large numbers of Judah's exiled community returned to Yehud during the reign of Cyrus (Ezra 5.1). Those who returned to Yehud were required to respond not only to the effects of the exile, but to the ongoing presence of a new imperial power. These elements of the narrative are beyond dispute. There is less agreement on how to interpret other aspects of the text. For example, Bob Becking suggests that a large number of Jews likely remained in Babylonia, Egypt, and elsewhere throughout the diaspora even as others returned sporadically (Becking 2006: 3). Oded Lipschits argues that the exiles returned in three distinct immigrant influxes following the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire. (The premise for this suggestion is found in Ezek. 2.2-2; Hag. 1.1; 2.2, 21; and Ezek. 7–8. The three returns coincided with the reigns of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes I, respectively, according to Lipschits) (Lipschits 2006: 32).

This Chapter examines the biblical text in the context of archaeological evidence. It is out of vogue to consider the value of the biblical text in serious academic work. Most scholars value these texts only to the extent that they narrate events in a fashion akin to contemporary history-telling. If the goal is to ascertain from the biblical text who said what precisely or when an event occurred then it is unlikely that the Bible is more reliable than a verbatim account taken by a person who experiences history and records it as Westerners do presently. However, I maintain that ideological aspects of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality undergird biblical stories and are either purposively or unwittingly woven into the substance of the biblical text. These perceptions enable us to witness an essential framework for how religion, race, gender and sexuality may have been understood during the time when the text was written and edited. Similarly, the archaeological record provides a promising albeit partial view of the Persian period in Yehud. Together, these textual and archaeological records give insights into what life may have been like for some segments of the population following the events of 586 BCE. Compared to existing interpretations, these dual spheres of data yield a broadened perspective of the social ethos and socioeconomic setting in Persian Yehud.

The notion that some Yehudite men exchanged their sons in marriage to guarantee access to the land is based on the Yehudites' need for economic viability in the midst of a sociopolitical dilemma. Evidence suggests that most postexilic Yehudite families did not own the land on which they lived. Therefore, they lacked viable means of support. At the same time, it was in the interest of Persian royalty and elites to ensure a loyal base of compliant subjects in Yehud. By so doing, the Persian Empire secured further defenses along the border of northern Egypt and along crucial portions of the Mediterranean Sea coast, and placed necessary infrastructure in the hill country. In these ways, Yehud was essential to the economic aspirations of the Achaemenid Empire.

The lack of fortifications and infrastructure in many areas of Yehud except the hill country bears out the notion that some regions of Yehud may have suffered such an economic deficit. But the presence of many artifacts, including presses for wine and olive oil from Ein Gedi and elsewhere in the hill region, may support Oded Lipschits's claim that the hill country offered a unique economic opportunity that was seized by the Achaemenid Empire absent the desire to establish the local Yehudite population socially, politically, or economically (Lipschits 2006: 30; Tel Aviv University 2006). Both Lipschits and Pierre Briant maintain that the products made in the hill country served as payment to the Achaemenid Empire, a point detailed below. The desire to not establish local economic power structures stands in stark contrast to the idea of developing economic interests in a region without local labor, for example. Elsewhere it has been argued that Yehudite garrisons were established by the Empire to protect imperial interests (Johnson 1999; Lipschits 2006: 30).

The next Chapter discusses marriage and intermarriage, and the implications of these marriages for women and consequently the entire בית אבות, in some detail. But here it is important to note that Yehudites used marriage as an opportunity for economic advancement. Marriage in many circumstances in the ancient world was partially, if not entirely, an economic transaction. The Hebrew Bible stories about Zelophehad's daughters (cf. Num. 27), and the narratives of Kings Saul, David and Solomon detailed in the Deuteronomistic History (cf. 1 Sam. 9–1 Kgs 3; esp. 2 Sam. 6–1 Kgs 3), demonstrate a strong link between marriage and land-right customs in ancient Israel. To lay claim to land and political power, men exchanged women, both concubines and wives. Examples of this policy (Abner [2 Sam. 3.6 JPS], Absalom [2 Sam. 13–19.11; esp. 2 Sam. 14.28 and 2 Sam. 16.20-23 JPS]; and Adonijah [1 Kgs 1–2; esp. 1.4, 41-53, and 2.13-25 JPS]) appear throughout the Succession Narrative. To take or give up one of the king's women demonstrated a range of political desires, from hoping to become king to determining the identity of the most powerful political figure. The act of taking a king's wife or concubine could symbolize newly asserted power, or demonstrate an attempt to usurp the king's rule. Conversely, if a king lost power, exchanging women proved to be an important aspect of assuming ultimate authority. Thus, claims on women's lives throughout the Succession Narrative are part of a network of ways in which the men laid claim among themselves and within the community to the most power. After winning military battles and securing popular support, acquiring the wives of the former ruler signified attaining utter control over all within the kingdom, even the former authority figure. Similarly, claiming one of the king's women signified the desire to usurp the existing powerbase and signaled that the pursuing man had aspirations to replace the king. In the Succession Narrative, asking for a king's wife or concubine was not tolerated, even if no threat was intended, as may have been the case with Adonijah. Such a request could have deadly consequences.

Elsewhere, the marriage of Ruth to Boaz exposes the significance of marriage to Naomi's and Ruth's economic viability (cf. Ruth 1–4). The ruse played on Judah by Tamar, his widowed daughter-in-law, to secure her rights to economic sustenance (cf. Gen. 38) is another compelling example of the link between marriage and the economy. The land-inheritance law articulated by Moses concerning Zelophehad's daughters permitted the deceased man's daughters to inherit their father's land and to marry, with the proviso that their marriages be endogamous to keep the land within the clan (Num. 27). The levirate structure illustrated in the stories of Ruth and Naomi, and of Tamar and Judah, not only ties economics to marriage, but seems to emphasize the plight of women. There is, then, ample evidence of the relationship between economics, politics, and marriage in the Hebrew Bible (Levenson 1980; Brewer 1904; Burrows 1940; Rowley 1947; Rabinowitz 1953; Meyers 1991; Weisberg 2004). This matter is discussed further in the next Chapter.

Though the archaeological record is incomplete, excavations since the late 1990s have yielded several important insights which help to paint a clearer portrait of Persian Yehud's economy. A conceptual framework such as World Systems Theory, combined with the existing archaeological record, lays the groundwork for a plausible hypothesis of what Yehud may have been like as a part of the 'Beyond the River Satrapy' during the Achaemenid period. For example, winepresses and olive oil equipment excavated in digs managed by Tel Aviv University support the notion that residents of Yehud's hill country provided the Persians with much-needed agrarian products such as wine and oil. Oded Lipschits argues that, in turn, these products provided a source for Yehud to pay tax revenue to the Persians (cf. Lipschits 2006). If the products were used only partly for tax purposes but also as a source of livelihood for the families that made them, then not only did the Empire rely on the Yehudite men, but these men relied on the Empire. This would suggest a symbiotic relationship between the Persians and the Yehudites premised on mutual economic need.

As a prelude to the analysis of Yehud's postexilic socioeconomic environment, the practical ramifications of the exile on those who were deported as well as those who remained in the land require further discussion. The Hebrew Bible provides valuable impressions and perceptions of the effects of exile and responses to it, revealing a diverse body of meanings. Information gleaned from biblical literature and interpreted through the lenses of contemporary anthropological and sociological analyses offers valuable tools for developing a plausible hypothesis of postexilic socioeconomic life in Yehud.

Relationships between kinship and marriage, and marriage and property rights, emerge in Ezra 9–10 and through archaeological artifacts of the period. Settlement patterns, coins, and a cadre of other archaeological evidence provide further economic data. However, before the economic analysis proceeds, it is important to establish a foundation for viewing the Yehudite community during the Achaemenid era. Morton Smith's and Peter Ackroyd's works together yield a useful platform for understanding the Persian Yehudite community. Prior to examining the archaeological evidence for indications about the economy, I discuss briefly World Systems Theory and feudalism, followed by a discussion of relevant archaeological evidence.

The goal of this Chapter is twofold: (1) to account for what scholars can assert based on well-reasoned interpretations of the material culture; and (2) to detail plausible inferences about the socioeconomic milieu of Persian Yehud. These inferences are founded on theoretical suppositions provided largely as a part of studies by scholars who use World Systems Theory. As a premise for beginning these economic discussions, I outline perspectives about the contours of social relations during the pre-exilic and exilic periods in Judah uniting the works of Smith and Ackroyd. The theological emphases in their analyses describe the experiences and responses of Judahite dwellers after the Babylonian exile and at the outset of the Persian Empire. Then the Chapter broadens to introduce major economic concepts and introduces material culture that bears on the economic portrait of Yehud during the Achaemenid era. Finally, I discuss the בית אבות ('father's house), the premiere institutional organization in Yehud.

Experiences of Exile

The crux of the problem experienced by the people of Yehud occurred in c. 586 BCE when Yhwh's metaphoric marriage partner lost their land-gift which had been provided to them as a symbol of ברית עולם ('everlasting covenant'). The agrarian people who were left in Yehud were poor, according to the biblical text. The land loss likely jeopardized further their economic stability. Judah's kin-based social structure endured yet another blow when the upper echelons and religious leadership of Judah were forced into exile. Still others reportedly fled Yehud as a result of the devastating effects of the Babylonians upon the people, the land, and their temple. The religious implications of the exile on Yehud were more fundamental than either nationhood or prosperity (Gen. 12.2-3, 7-8; 13.14), but the people's existence relied on their relationship with Yhwh. Hebrew Bible literature and the plentiful scholarship on this literature inform the first portion of this Chapter. Social scientific studies on the implications of exilic conditions, when considered with texts that emerge from exilic and postexilic contexts, give great insight into the meanings of these biblical texts. Lipschits and others argue that it was neither in the best interest of the Babylonians nor of the Persians who followed them to create a structural vacuum in Yehud. Yet, it was not in their interest to establish fully viable political infrastructures, either. Many scholars argue that Jerusalem, which had been destroyed during the Babylonian exile, remained terribly poor for several years thereafter, reaching the status of Yehud's capital some time following Nehemiah's return, c. 450 BCE (Lipschits 2006; Stern 2006). However, the coastal regions in Palestine held great promise for returnees from Babylonia. Certainly, the Phoenicians had parlayed its locale into economic prosperity; a similar opportunity was available to these Yehudites (Elayi 1982: 83). Artifacts found in Samaria reveal a near-continuous stretch of prosperity for its occupants (Rainey 1969: 63). The prosperity experienced in the coastal regions coupled with tenuous economic times in Babylonia may have encouraged the return of Yehudites to Judah (Lipschits 2006). Lipschits notes that the Temple's fate may have been a chief consideration that urged several Yehudites with priestly roots to return to their homeland.

Whatever the cause, many returned to Yehud. In light of pre-exilic social structures, how did these postexilic groups reorganize? A key to the analysis that follows is Smith's and Ackroyd's depictions of ancient Israelite religion and literature. Morton Smith's work focuses on the idea that pre-exilic ancient Israelite religion represented two camps: those who worshipped Yhwh only, and those who worshipped Yhwh primarily but not exclusively. Ackroyd's study of the exile and restoration of Judah categorizes the biblical responses to the exile into four groups. Here I combine Ackroyd's general classifications of biblical texts into responses from the exile, and Morton Smith's thesis that Judah's pre-exilic community consisted of two major kinds of worshipers to propose a scenario of how and why so many different and conflicting accounts of the exilic experience coexisted and became canonized. Variations in interpretations of events may be vital clues to the existence of divergent religious ideologies in pre-exilic Judah. In addition to the works of Ackroyd and Smith, I interject analysis by other scholars in an effort to broaden an understanding of Persian Yehudites following the return of some of the exiles. Moreover, I posit that pre-exilic

Judah may have contained many of the elements necessary for heightened internal turmoil. These elements are embedded and detectable in the different explanations of the exile. It is essential to illustrate the ways in which the exilic conditions portrayed in biblical literature spawned (re)new(ed) areas of tensions for the different factions, namely, struggles tied to the Yehudites' socioeconomic status. The divergent religious traditions, a damaged social structure caused by the separation and exile of Judah's leaders, the elite, and craftsmen from the other segments of society diminished the socioeconomic status of Yehudites. A host of archaeological studies, when combined with findings from social-scientific research, provide a fuller, more grounded perspective about postexilic Yehud.

Approaching the social environment that faced the Judahites in 586 BCE involves considering the immediate problem of exile and its effects. As a prelude to contemplating the circumstances of 586 BCE, it is helpful to review briefly the Judahite perceptions of the past Israelite exile and their effects on the Judahites. In 722 BCE, Yehud's northern counterpart suffered an exile which may have foreshadowed what the south would later confront. Indeed, the exile may have been an active element in Judah's response to the events of 586 BCE.

After the first exile, the northern kingdom was annexed to Assyria. By the postexilic period, c. 450, and the emergence of Nehemiah on the scene, the northern people of Yhwh who had been annexed to Assyria were perceived as ethnically Other. According to Lipschits, the Assyrian ruler Tiglath-pileser III

> conquered the strongest and largest kingdoms in the region, [and he inflicted] heavy damage [on them]. He deported large parts of the populations, replacing them with exiles from remote regions and annexed their territory to Assyria, turning them into Assyrian provinces (Lipschits 2006: 19-20).

Perhaps more important, Tiglath-pileser III purportedly converted the national distinctiveness of subject peoples (Lipschits 2006: 20). Lipschits seems to have an aversion to using modern categorizations to discuss this ancient problem. However, the biblical narrative portrays a variety of ideological strains which depict *understandings of self-difference* (Kessler 2006; Berquist 2006). These socially constructed views of Us vs. Them are referred to here as perceptions about ethnicity. They are statements about what constitutes a group, the origins of the group, and ideologies concerning group distinctiveness.

The effects of the exile by the Assyrians may have had historical, ideological, and psychosocial implications for Judah's inhabitants in 586 BCE (Tabori 1972: 23; Barudy 1989). Biblical texts claim that the Babylonians took the lion's share of Judahites forcibly from their native land in 586 BCE. Those who remained in the land following the Babylonian exile may have understood their predicament in a context that included the history of the northern kingdom. Contrary to the biblical text, which promotes the notion that the land was stripped barren and left utterly desolate, Lipschits asserts that

> [t]he Babylonians had no reason to create a vacuum in Palestine. On the contrary, he surmises that it was the Babylonians' interest to preserve the rural settlements in those areas in order to receive their wine, olive oil, grain, and other agricultural produce as taxes. However, because the Babylonians did not have a specific policy for developing and protecting the settlements, especially in the peripheral regions of the south, many changes occurred there, apparently as a side effect of the collapse of the central systems… (Lipschits 2006: 24).

Nevertheless, in support of the notion that Israel's exiles affected Judah's perception of exile, Ezra–Nehemiah casts its depiction of the Yehudite experience in the context of Israel's larger understanding of history. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the apparent xenophobia expressed in Ezra–Nehemiah, for example, may represent reactions to this long and fear-evoking history of exile.

Although not all people experience exile in the same fashion, as noted earlier, psychologist Leon Festinger notes that exile can be a traumatic, identity-wrenching experience (Festinger 1957: 262). In her recent work on Holocaust art, Brett Ashley Kaplan notes in a lengthy discussion the intricacies and complexities involved in viewing art that emerged from such a horrific period in human history (Kaplan 2007). While the Babylonian and Assyrian exiles are not equivalent to the Holocaust, they represent a similarly complicated moment, one that calls into play a variety of complex emotions.

Multiple exiles, then, might be that much more damaging to the psyche of a people. Serial trauma brought by consecutive exiles could provoke the group to formulate its identity in the strongest terms. For this reason, we need not conceptualize ethnicity as equivalent to race, as casual observers typically do today. But the deep-seated awareness of difference conjured by these experiences may have been more than sufficient to evoke the Us vs. Them response so often typical of ethnic delineations (cf. Jones 1997). Jorge Barudy, who devoted 10 years to studying Latino/Latina exiles, found that his subjects experienced a complex of identity-related issues, including polymorphic psychological and physiological symptoms which they rarely connected but were in fact the result of their exilic experiences. The miscognition of the self by the patients led analysts to conclude that exile may 'provoke an exogenous and forced change in the person's identity' (Barudy 1989: 716).

While the Judahites' ancient experience clearly was not genocidal, two salient points must be made (Klein 1979: 3; Ackroyd 1968) First, scholars who note the Judahites' lack of the most extreme deprivation seem to be indifferent to the suggestion that the experience was nevertheless severely traumatic. Perhaps observers who have not personally experienced significant disruption in their lives find it easier to dismiss the possibility of exilic psychic trauma compared to those whose life experiences have been more unsettling. Second, traditional interpretations of the exile do not incorporate contemporary data that might illuminate the exilic experience of Israel and Judah, perhaps because such findings have been considered unimportant. But according to Barudy's analysis, exile constitutes an extreme condition that neglects the fundamental human need to be confirmed as a person. This neglect is in itself a form of violence (Barudy 1989: 717). The consequences of such experiences include the need to establish strictly marked boundaries and to display of xenophobic reactions to anyone perceived as Other.

Notwithstanding the experiences of the northern kingdom, the events of 586 BCE probably represented ample cause for an array of responses by the Judahites to the annihilation that had threatened them since c. 597 BCE. The Hebrew Bible is surprisingly silent about the details of the exile itself, though Jer. 1.14-19 records the oncoming onslaught of the foe from the north. A few other details are available in the biblical text. The flight to Egypt following Gedaliah's assassination (Jer. 41.17-18; 42.1-6), mention of the third deportation in 582 BCE (Jer. 52.30), and the brief discussion of Jehoiachin's release (2 Kgs 25.27-30) complete the biblical portrayal of the exile.

There was, however, a multitude of biblical responses to the events leading up to the exile. The books of Lamentations, Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Ezra–Nehemiah, Psalm 126, and the Deuteronomic History all record theological explications of the Babylonian exile. It is not clear whether the responses represent the economically deprived who were left in the land or the residents who were transported away and later returned to Yehud. Perhaps they reflect a combination of expressions emanating from two communities. Peter Ackroyd likens the challenge of using biblical texts to describe the exilic experience to the thorny problem of dating the texts themselves (Ackroyd 1968: 40). Even if one accepts the Documentary Hypothesis, which provides that the Priestly Writers were responsible for literature written after c. 550 BCE, allowance must be made for variability within that school of thought.

Even given the challenge of using the biblical text to understand the response to the Babylonian exile and events thereafter, it is unwise to relegate these works to the status of myth. Every nation and ethnic group has a story, parts of which may be factual and others not. Smith's and Ackroyd's analyses, when read complementarily give a nuanced view to the literature on with the exile and its aftermath. This allows the reader to contextualize a wide variety of perspectives preserved in the Hebrew Bible, and formulates a starting point for depicting Yehud during the Achaemenid era.

Responses to the Exile

Smith's and Ackroyd's scholarship is useful in developing a framework for understanding how the people of Judah reacted to the Babylonian exile. Before the exile, two groups comparable to the rival constituencies identifiable in Ezra 9–10 coexisted in Judah's religious community, according to Smith: the syncretistic group and the Yahweh-alone group (Smith 1987: 81). Smith theorizes that exilic conditions accentuated the divergent interests of the two rival groups, such that they became more polarized. The exiles clung more tightly to their Yahweh-alone ideology and the peoples of the land became further ensconced in their syncretistic views (Smith 1987: 81). Ackroyd's four theological reactions may align with Smith's two groups. One theological reaction that is prevalent in the Hebrew Bible is the notion that the exile represented the wrath and judgment of God upon humanity (Ackroyd 1968). Accordingly, acceptance of God's judgment and repentance for wrongdoing is not uncommon (Ackroyd 1968). The book of Lamentations exemplifies this kind of response. Even though God is perceived as angry and punishing, acceptance and repentance are a viable means within the religion's symbol system of accounting for the divine destruction. These responses could also function to stabilize collective identity amidst the crisis brought by the psychological devastation of the exile.

The second reaction seen in biblical literature elaborates on the disaster and the Day of Yhwh (Ackroyd 1968). The book of Lamentations and the reinterpretation of earlier prophetic literature attest to this response. The mentality here is a resigned acceptance of the disaster, similar to the response attributed to the Yahweh-alone group, but with the expectation that Yhwh would rescue his people eventually.

Ralph Klein writes that it would be misleading and incorrect to compare the Babylonian exile with modern-day catastrophes (Klein 1979: 3). Nevertheless, the literature expressing the intense nature of the bondage experienced by the exiles reveals that whether or not they experienced physical shackles, they understood their plight as a form of bondage (cf. Ezra). Ackroyd confirms his perspective by noting that the exiles from Judah enjoyed a level of liberty while they were in Babylon. This freedom included the ability to settle into communities, marry, and to govern their personal affairs (Ackroyd 1968: 32).

Two important points are necessary to contextualize Ackroyd's comment. First, the conditions of freedom, if they existed at all, likely existed as long as the overlords perceived their subjects as loyal and obedient. Certainly, evidence from the Achaemenid era demonstrates a similar perspective toward subjects of the Empire. When subjects failed to be compliant, they paid dearly. Second, there are multiple views about the Babylonian exile, some of which disavow Ralph Klein's view. For example, the Psalmist wrote a poignant antithetical viewpoint: ‘For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?’ (Ps. 137.3-4). More importantly, contemporary studies on exile attest repeatedly to the longing and sense of bondage that exiles feel. Clearly, it would appear to be virtually impossible to experience genuine liberty in the face of forced expulsion from one’s homeland.

Smith argues that the Babylonian exile changed the purview of the Yahweh-alone group dramatically. Whereas the Yahweh-alone and syncretistic parties coexisted peacefully in pre-exilic Judah, the Babylonian exile left the Yahweh-alone group with a sense of superiority over those who remained in the land. This sensibility was fed by a sense of postexilic authenticity or legitimacy. (The ‘Suffering Servant Songs’ in Deutero-Isaiah offer a similar idea that suffering is linked to the nature of being God’s people). But there is a more common sociological reason for the internal strife that emerged between the different factions. Frequently, fierce infighting materializes over who represents the most authentic national interests of the people (Shain 1989: 38). Thus, it is feasible to imagine such a scenario between the Yahweh-alone and syncretistic groups in Yehud as the former exiles returned to Yehud.

The third reaction to the exile identified by Ackroyd is the return to older cults (Ackroyd 1968: 40). Ancient Israelites worshipped a number of gods and goddesses (Ackerman 1993; van der Toorn 1992; Frymer-Kensky 1992). Since the peoples of the land were already syncretistic, the notion that Marduk through Nebuchadnezzar had defeated Yhwh may have helped to engender an atmosphere conducive to the resurgence of worshiping other gods and goddesses while simultaneously diminishing the worship of Yhwh. If Yhwh had been defeated by Marduk, then the introduction of other gods to the pantheon would not have seemed inappropriate.

Desecration of the temple and the fall of Yhwh may have combined to reorient the symbol system of the people who remained in the land during the exilic period. Clifford Geertz explicates the human necessity of systems of meaning such as religion (Geertz 1973: 89-90). Symbol systems reflect both a people’s worldview and their most extensive ideas concerning order (Geertz 1973: 89-90). Without symbol systems, human beings suffer heightened anxiety (Geertz 1973: 89-90). Given the need to make sense of the exile and being left in the land without familiar leadership and the priesthood, yet with the constant reminder of the razed temple before them, worshiping other gods, even in lieu of Yhwh, is understandable.

References to the worship of other gods and goddesses are scattered throughout biblical literature. Deutero-Isaiah’s disparaging remarks about the handmade gods (Isa. 44.9-20) illustrates the existence of a rival group of worshipers. Jeremiah’s reference to the adulation of the Queen of Heaven

(Jer. 44.19-20) makes clear the presence of the group in pre-exilic times. These texts support Smith's contentions about one or more syncretistic groups. To align this group with the postexilic 'peoples of the land' is consistent with the notion that some groups were not Yahweh-alone worshipers.

Belief that Yhwh was trounced by Marduk certainly would have influenced the way that he was perceived by worshipers. The outcome of actual events and the Judahites' concomitant subservient relationship to the Babylonians may have caused even some who worshiped Yahweh-alone to abandon Yhwh in pursuit of other gods and goddesses. Ackroyd suggests that Deutero-Isaiah's protest against strange gods noted above (Isa. 44.9-20) represents, in part, an admonition to those who had forsaken Yhwh for other gods and goddesses (Ackroyd 1968: 42).

Identifying the sons of the exile with Smith's Yahweh-alone party, and the peoples of the land with the syncretistic group, makes more palpable the tensions that may have existed between the groups. The perceptions about exile expressed in postexilic biblical literature and aligned with Ackroyd's four theological perspectives yield a compelling thumbnail sketch of group dynamics and group differences. These are evident throughout Ezra–Nehemiah. Undoubtedly, both the sons of the exile and the peoples of the land were influenced by their circumstances and environment. They were compelled to embrace their convictions and to reformulate their personal and group identities as best as they could negotiate. Problems arose when these different hegemonic entities encountered each other after generations of reinforcing their respective identities.

The two rival groups represent a struggle for power among a few elite leaders, a small, powerful sector of the overall Yehudite community. For this reason, it is important to emphasize the sociopolitical, economic, ethnic, gendered, and sexual continuum operative in Persian Yehud. Smith's and Ackroyd's analyses in addition to the biblical text are helpful to developing an entré to Achaemenid Yehudite society. But to understand thoroughly social constructions that functioned in Yehud during the Persian period, this complex and nuanced problem requires more detailed attention to all facets of the multidimensional dynamic. Let us begin by laying out some of the economic concerns of Persian Yehudites, beginning with a discussion of terms used to describe how the entire economic structure of the Achaemenid Empire may have functioned.

Yehud under the Achaemenid Empire's Economy

The first section of this Chapter probed the effects of the exile, focusing on theological responses to the exile according the Hebrew Bible. I presented suggestions about the social dynamics with the Yehudite community during the pre- and postexilic periods based largely on works by Morton Smith and Peter Ackroyd. In this section of Chapter 3, I offer social-scientific data including archaeological evidence and a theoretical means for interpreting the material culture from Yehud during the Persian period. Because Yehud was not an isolated entity, the discussion begins with a broad-based discussion of the Achaemenid Empire and the theoretical framework that will be employed to help explain the dynamics emergent in the Empire and Yehud, and how the two interacted.

World Systems Theory is a helpful way to analyze the complex economy of the Achaemenid Empire. Indeed, the significance of this theory for this study cannot be overestimated. As helpful as the biblical text can be in revealing relevant ideologies and notions about social constructions of identity, it is unreliable for understanding economic matters and more importantly, for discerning Yehud as a non-central entity. World Systems Theory, as articulated by Andre Frank, Barry Gills, Andrew Boswell, and Christopher Chase-Dunn, accounts for a variety of circumstances that confronted the Achaemenid Empire and smaller elements within it. In so doing, the theory provides a mechanism not only for understanding the major, central power but for appreciating with greater precision than would otherwise be possible smaller, lesser known or lesser documented economic entities such as Yehud. Importantly, there is no need to forsake nor compromise the context of the larger empire to gain data about Yehud.

Essentially, proponents of World Systems Theory argue that all empires, even ancient ones such as the Achaemenid Empire, consist of three parts. The core defines and describes the controlling interest of the Empire. The semi-periphery, which provides a buffer, protects the core and enjoys limited economic benefits. The periphery, or the outer limit of the empire, is the most economically exploited of the three parts of the system.

Andre Frank and Barry Gills argue in a sweeping analysis of 5,000 years of history that the so-called A- and B-phases represent the rise and demise of world cities over a period of 200 to 250 years per city. Enmeshed in complex social, political, economic, and cultural systems such as the one represented by the Achaemenid era, the cycles of emergence and destruction occur reliably, according to a Frank and Gill and a later study by Andrew Bosworth (Frank 1993; Bosworth 1995). Christopher Chase-Dunn scrutinizes 8,000 years of history with similar results (Dunn 1989: 361-76; Chase-Dunn 1989). These elaborate studies, and documentation by Mesopotamian documents of capital accumulation dated to as early as the Bronze Age and as late as the Achaemenid period, ask whether capitalism may have emerged much earlier than previously assumed. These studies argue that a precursor to capitalism likely existed during the Achaemenid era and earlier. Indeed, Frank argues convincingly that an interrelated economic system had emerged throughout the ancient Near East as early as

3000 BCE. Babylonian documents confirm that similar conditions existed during the Achaemenid era. These claims by Frank, Gills, Chase-Dunn, and Bosworth are not without criticism. But even skeptics attest to the soundness of Frank’s claims on material and theoretical grounds [cf. Antonio Gilman 1993: 410]).

The notion of capital accumulation ties to feudalism. Feudalism describes manorial economic structures in medieval Europe. Susan Reynolds suggests that feudalism is based on ancient Roman law (Reynolds 1994: 2-3). Although modern discussions of feudalism, fiefdoms, fiefs, and feudal tenants are commonly limited to the medieval period, some scholars question the limits of this definition. For example, Geo Widengren traces feudalism to before the Parthian and Sassanid Empires and to the Achaemenid Empire. Widengren uses a large body of data to detail the relationships between governmental operations (institutions with military responsibilities for protecting feudal tenants) and tribute obligations, taxes, and hereditary familial status of these properties. Widengren writes:

> Si l’on compare ces deux textes qui, évidemment, sont étroitement liés on trouve que Cyrus a donné pays, χωρα, maisons, οικοι, et serviteurs, υπηκοοι [*sic*]. Il les a donné à tous ceux qui ont voulu rester auprès de lui. Ces possessions demeuraient encore au temps de Xénophon en possession de leurs descendants. Les domains constituaient donc une possession héréditaire (Widengren 1957: 118-19).

Widengren illustrates ably the ways in which the economic structure of the feudal system resembled the economic system that functioned during the Achaemenid period.

While Marxists understand feudalism as a precursor to capitalism, here it is viewed as one of several elements of capitalism that emerged or had a presence several hundred years before the Marxist construction of modern capitalism. This presupposition is in keeping with views expressed by Frank and Gills who maintain that there is little difference between orthodox Marxist capitalism, medieval feudalism, and Achaemenid feudalism. For example, Achaemenid written documents reveal evidence of credit systems; mechanisms for sales, leases, and rentals; and other complex economic processes that may have been associated with capital accumulation. The modes of production, technologies, and the quantities and quality of production had different permutations but the underpinnings of these systems were similar, as were their end goals. Joannés describes the Achaemenid Babylonian system as follows:

> Le system du fief, en Babylonie achéménide peut être défini comme un système établi sur la base qu’une terre et son revenue agricole sont attribués à quelqu’un par un grand organisme propriétaire, en échange d’un service précis à accomplir. Il n’y a pas, pour ces terres, de denomination générale, mais plutôt, semble-t-il, une appellation particulière donnée à la tenure en

> fonction du service rendu par celui qui l'occupe. Ce service peut être de nature civile ou militaire, sans qu'une frontière très précis existe d'ailleurs entre les deux (Joannés 1982: 10).

Joannés dates the first appearance of these domain lands, which were eventually prominent throughout Babylonia, to King Cyrus. He attributes the civil aspects of this economic phenomenon to this early period, noting that military feudalism developed toward the latter part of Cambyses' reign. In a later discussion, Joannés notes that taxes were levied against all lands, even those administered by the temple. Joannés raises questions about the feudal system to draw attention to access to resources—human and natural—which led to the capital accumulation enjoyed by the royalty and a few other beneficiaries. Here I maintain that some in the Yehudite community provided resources to the Empire through intermarriage. Relatively few Yehudites who benefited from the Achaemenid Empire by either providing military assistance in exchange for economic compensation, or by farming land which yielded agricultural products needed by the royalty. But several archaeological contributions support the conclusion that although Yehud and the other entities that composed the Persian Empire's provinces functioned somewhat autonomously, relatively few enjoyed wealth or prosperity. The fact that Yehud participated in a vigorous regional economy and that disparities in wealth were commonplace sustains the contention that individual Yehudite men had an incentive to look favorably on interethnic marriage as a means of enhancing their economic circumstances and their social standing, even at the risk of threatening the group's identity.

A central part of analyzing the Yehudite social structure or the בית אבות requires considering the role of kin. This is understood here as the 'ancestral houses'—the 'community'. Several Hebrew Bible scholars define the phrase similarly. Tamara Eskenazi uses this term in specific reference to the postexilic community involved in the intermarriage dispute described in Ezra–Nehemiah (Eskenazi 1992: 26; Weinberg 1992; Smith-Christopher 1994). With respect to the ancestral houses, the links between the formerly agrarian Judahite families and the same families generations after they had lost their land as a result of the Babylonian incursion highlight the economic features of landownership. The discussion investigates social identity as it relates to an exilic community bereft of power and authority over its predominant economic resource, the land, even as it lives on it. The monetary value and theological importance of the land are a vital part of understanding the Yehudite community, the costs of exile, and ultimately, the edict against intermarriage. As such, these matters emerge repeatedly in the Hebrew Bible. The postexilic writer(s) and editor(s) of Prov. 5.7-8, 10 summarize the economic and religious ramifications of foreign women and intermarriage succinctly: 'And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house; lest you give your honor to others…lest strangers take their fill of your strength and your labors go to the house of an alien…'. The lack of absolute control over the land is significant because it symbolizes a break in the people's relationship with Yhwh and reflects economic matters which can alter marriage choices. The analysis of the בית אבות offers further explanations of the religious and economic effects of the Babylonian invasion and exile as the two relate to the later Persian rule over the former Babylonian Empire, especially Yehud.

Yehud in the 'Beyond the River' Province: Political Autonomy, Economic Power, and Achaemenid Ruling Strategies

Autonomy and the Economy

Any serious discussion of Yehud must consider its neighbors in Syria-Palestine and an understanding of the relationship between the satrapy 'Beyond the River' and the other entities that composed the Persian Empire. Ezra–Nehemiah contains several references to the עבר הנהר ('Beyond the River'). A.F. Rainey notes that Greek sources usually identify the term עבר הנהר with Syria only (Rainey 1969: 52). Although the Persians called the geographic area designated עבר הנהר *Athura* (Assyria), several ancient documents attest that the satrapy 'Beyond the River' included Palestine and Syria (Rainey 1969: 51; cf. Eph'al 1988: 141ff.). Thus, all of the relations between these regions and others bear on any analysis of the internal political and social dynamics in Yehud.

Although much archaeological evidence from the Persian period in Palestine still needs to be systematized for use, available data reveal that some portions of the neo-Babylonian kingdom, including Judah, remained occupied after the Babylonian siege and may have increased in size during the Persian period. However, other areas that had been vacated and desolated by Nebuchadnezzar's hand remained in shambles (Ahlstrom 1993: 807; Lipschits 2006). Detailed data about the full extent of the demise visited upon Judah, Tyre, and the Transjordan are not known (Ahlstrom 1993: 805). However, Lawrence Stager's 1992 excavations at Ashkelon culminated with evidence affirming Ashkelon's devastation in c. 603 BCE by Nebuchadnezzar (Staeger 1992).

Since no written sources show definitively what happened to Judah, there are many different hypotheses about how to view exilic and postexilic Judah. Gösta Ahlström suggests that Judah may have become a Babylonian province or that it was incorporated into Samerina (Ahlstrom 1993). Albrecht Alt's view, later supported by Kurt Galling and others, claims that the Babylonians annexed Judah to Samerina, leaving Judah under the authority of that foreign ruler (Alt 1964). This perspective assumes that Judah's status remained unchanged under Persian rule. Sean McEvenue further maintains that Yehud was not only a province before Nehemiah, but that it was not comparable to Samerina, Gal'aza, Dor, Megiddo, or Ashdod (McEvenue 1981).

A multitude of internal complications within the 'Beyond the River' satrapy would have resulted in Yehud if the imperial policies of the Persian Empire had affixed Yehud to Samerina or Gal'aza, or had attempted to have one governor rule the different areas of the satrapy under one set of laws. In such an instance, the disadvantage falls to Yehud. Yehudites had not experienced exile. But Samerina and Gal'aza had experience with Assyria, the effects of exile, and its aftermath. Presumably, these regions acclimated to Babylonian and then Persian control in a somewhat different way than did the Judahites. This is so because all of these entities had to some extent experienced generations of exile and domination. Additionally, ethnicity may have been a prominent issue, since under Assyrian, Babylonian, then Persian rule, different groups of people were transported in and out of various regions to accommodate the prevailing government's needs. Economic differences may have also existed among the ethnic groups based on which one had been annihilated most recently, and was therefore least capable of adapting to its role in the Empire.

Yehud is best construed as a colony, one part of an imperial whole rather than as an annexed portion of another entity (Berquist 1995). As a colony, its strategic location in the semi-periphery of the Empire rendered it very important to the well-being of the Achaemenid Empire. Yehud's geographic location in relationship to Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea coast, as well as to Ashkelon, Samaria, Syria, and Phoenicia, thrust Yehud into the center of important military and economic functions pertinent to the Persian Empire's continued success. Yehud was involved variously with the neighbors such as the Greek city-states, or consumed by internal relations of Jerusalem.

Despite the problems presented by early methodological inconsistencies in the archaeology of the Persian period, and the fact that much of the material culture from Israel was destroyed in the early pillaging for monumental discoveries, Israeli archaeologist Ephraim Stern has compiled an enormous number of artifacts that help to develop a portrait of Yehud as part of the international activities present in the 'Beyond the River' satrapy and indeed throughout the Achaemenid Empire. Stern's analyses of pottery, terracotta figurines, incense altars, daily utensils, burial practices, and other excavated material culture found throughout various sites including Yehud, though not necessarily originating from Palestine, underscores the perspective that Yehud was not an isolated temple-community (Renfrew 1991: 34-37; Stern 1982).

Part of the material culture collected in excavations throughout the regions formerly considered parts of the Persian Empire includes weights, coins stamped יהד, official seals of the Provinces of Yehud and Samaria, and seal impressions (Stern 1982: 196-228; Ronen 2006). Weights located throughout the Persian Empire, including Syria-Palestine, reveal the existence of both a Babylonian-Persian weight system and a local weight system in Palestine (Stern 1982: 196-228). Commercial documents from Elephantine confirm the use of such a system and a local weight system in Palestine (Stern 1982: 217). Other Elephantine documents discuss weights in silver in relation to the wages of soldiers, the price of bridal dowries and gifts, and the sale of slaves (Porten 1968: 62-80; van Alpen 2004–2005). However, whether or not common people had access to the weights is unsubstantiated.

Additionally, the presence of coins minted in Palestine as well as places as far away as Egypt and Greece indicates interaction, possibly trade, between Syria-Palestine and other lands. The data concerning the coins and the presence of foreign wares such as pottery in Syria-Palestine validate the existence of more than a subsistence economy. The challenge posed by the Greek coins found in Palestine is their small number.

All aspects of the Yehudite economy are not clear. Ya'akov Meshorer notes that in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, Syria-Palestine used only foreign (that is, Greek and Phoenician) coins. Stern argues that the יהד coins, which were probably struck in the fourth or third centuries BCE, were made under the authority of the Achaemenid Empire. Stern and Meshorer disagree about the places of origin of the יהד coins. Meshorer argues that the 'Philisto-Arabian' coins were struck in Gaza rather than in Jerusalem, where the Yehud coins are believed to have originated (Meshorer 1967: 35-36; Stern 1982). John Wilson Betlyon notes that none of the coins bear a mint mark, with the exception of the provinces' names which appear in either paleo-Aramaic or paleo-Hebrew (Betlyon 1986: 633-34). To date, several coins have been excavated, including several variations of the יהד coins (Ronen 2006). Several coins which had been minted in Byblos, Arvad, Tyre, Sidon, Gaza and Ashdod have been found as well.

As noted earlier, scholars suggest that neither Persian imperial money nor coins emergent from the Empire circulated in Palestine between c. 420 and 332 BCE. These scholars hold that monies utilized for daily living in Yehud and Samaria took the form of small silver coins, some of which were imported from Athens and backed by regional governors. Also, there is evidence of a substantial number of Athenian imitations that appear to have circulated in the region during the Achaemenid era. Ya'akov Meshorer adds that in addition to the Athenian coins, Phoenician coins were found in Yehud as well (Meshorer 1967: 35). Despite the provinces' ability to strike coinage and their semi-autonomous status vis-à-vis the Empire, the great king attired in Persian cloak and crown was embossed on imperial monies and the coinage of the provinces as a reminder of the king's unquestioned authority (Mildenberg 1997: 12-14). Leo Mildenberg notes emphatically that the coin imagery is of the king, not a deity. The regal imagery reiterated the messages found on the Persian Bisutun reliefs, according to Mildenberg. Its purpose was to underscore the Great King's unquestionable power and authority throughout the Achaemenid Empire (Mildenberg 2000: 93-94). This accounts for why the image appears on both Samarian and Yehudite coinage (Mildenberg 2000).

Not all scholars agree on when these coins were struck, as noted previously. Nahman Avigad's study is noteworthy. He challenged Ya'akov Meshorer's estimation of minting dates based on information gleaned from several other artifacts including bullae, seals, and stamped jars. Avigad studied 67 inscribed items, 65 bullae (whole and fragmented), and two seals. He examined 350 jar handles marked יהוד or ידת ('Yehud') concluding that these items, which often had titles associated with the names of Hebrew onomasticon, confirmed Yehud's provincial status early in Achaemenid era. The outcome of Avigad's study and the presence of various coins struck in different parts of the 'Beyond the River' satrapy together indicate that multiple official legacies functioned in Syria-Palestine simultaneously.

Coins from the Achaemenid era raise another set of important questions about the economy, intra- and inter-satrapy relations, and the Persian administration. John Betlyon argues that the production of Yehud coins happened in conjunction with a revolt by the Phoenicians and a part of Yehud against the Persian authorities. He suggests that a high priest is depicted on coinage, which symbolized divine sanction of the uprising (Betlyon 1986: 637-39). Such loftiness is as implausible as the idea that Yehud controlled its own destiny fully and independently of Persian approval.

Thus, while Yehud was not annexed, neither was it isolated nor entirely independent. Yehud may have acted in concert with its neighbors on some occasions but independently on others. Stamped jars in Jerusalem, Ramat Rahel, Tell-en-Nasbe, Bethany, Mozah, Gezer, Jericho, and En-gedi suggest to Avigad and others that a taxation system existed (Avigad 1976: 21; Lipschits 2006). This implies that some larger more powerful entity received Yehud's taxes. Indeed, several scholars argue that a taxation system accounts for the relatively large body of material culture that remains from Yehud (Avigad 1976: 21; Stern 1982; Hoglund 1992; Machinist 1994; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1999). Alternatively, James Christoph maintains that the corpus of stamped jar handles supports the conclusion that trade rather than taxation was central to Yehud during the Achaemenid era (Christoph 1993: 182). The two positions are not necessarily antithetical if the World Systems schema is accurate. Anne Killebrew embraces a similar argument in her World Systems analysis of the emergence of ancient Israel (Killebrew 2005). Taxation represents one facet of the Achaemenid Empire's economy. It is linked to trade, modes of production, class differentials, and notions of capital accumulation. These economic characteristics of the Achaemenid era are featured in the Hebrew Bible and in the Aramaic papyri from Elephantine and Mesopotamian documents. Christopher Chase-Dunn remarks,

> In class societies a very fundamental set of institutions which are the center of modes of productions are those social relations of production which allow a class of exploiters to appropriate surplus product from a class of direct producers. These institutions—forms of labor control—vary across different modes of production (Chase-Dunn 1989: 15).

According to Chase-Dunn, there is a relationship between the politically determined distribution of goods and the establishment of coercive organizations. Class formation, privilege to resources, and the means of extracting surplus goods are vital to state formation (Chase-Dunn 1989: 15-16). Additionally, 'states must be able to legitimate their actions and mobilize participation' (tax-paying and warfare) (Chase-Dunn 1989: 35). Available data from the Achaemenid Empire demonstrate the existence of decentralized tributary modes of production and distribution.

The Babylonian documents examined by Frances Joannés, including contracts and credit agreements, for example, reveal the presence of complicated economic interactions not dissimilar to feudalism. Also, they exhibit a tax system, trade, and the presence of a military system in Mesopotamia. Undoubtedly, the vast geographical nature of the Empire required multiple ruling strategies. The administration, buttressed by the military, operated to control classes and to dominate intersocietal competition. There is clear evidence that the Achaemenid Empire used resources from all parts of its Empire to staff the military (Head 1992). But there is little reason not to accept that Yehud was a part of the larger economic system that is described so vividly in the Babylonian documents and Greek sources, and detailed by social scientists who embrace World Systems Theory. Thus, I conclude that there was a functioning tribute system throughout the Achaemenid economic system, including in Yehud. Andre Frank argues that the world economic system in the Phoenicia and the Levant peaked between 800 and 650 BCE (Frank 1993: 400). But the Achaemenid Empire's emergence provided political unity and a tribute system that in turn well positioned the region for 'hegemonic accumulation' (Frank 1993: 401). By Phase A, between 650-400 BCE, 'economic development in Greece [replaced] the Phoenicians' (Frank 1993: 401). Thus, rather than a part of the core, Yehud and other parts of the 'Beyond the River' satrapy were a part of the semi-periphery. Nehemiah 5, for example, points to the prevalence of some form of coercive exploitation such as taxation. The same pericope elaborates the poverty experienced by members of lower classes, some of whom resorted ultimately to selling their families into slavery to resolve debt. Intriguingly, Ezra 9–10 finalizes its argument against interethnic marriage with a financial threat against those who refuse to yield to the edict.

Indeed, Pierre Briant occupies an interesting middle ground with reference to the question of taxation or tribute. Briant maintains that Achaemenid rulers were primarily concerned with political matters and only secondarily interested in economic ones. Briant writes:

> Il n'en reste pas moins que globalement la guerre a été plutôt source d'enrichissements pour l'ethno-classe dominante et pour le Roi en particulier: domains, produits du pillage, utilization des populations de l'Empire ont permis aux Perses d'accroître leur richesse et leur puissance. Il est clair en effet qu'une part très importante des charges financières liées à la guerre n'est pas supportée directement par l'administration centrale: la guerre est financée pour la plus grand part par le travail et les contributions des populations tributaires, qui bien souvent sont touchée de plein fouet par le consequences le plus déplorables des operations militaires (pillages des campagnes)… [C]ette politique soit fondée sur une rationalité politique. C'est ce qui ne peut pas faire de doute: mais, il faut sans doute être plus prudent sur l'existence d'une politique économique au sens strict du terme. Le seul traité théorique existent—les Economiques du Pseudo-Aristote—traite des finances et non d'économique (Briant 1988: 177-78).

According to Briant, the Achaemenid Empire's conquests permitted it access to tribute, which in turn sustained the conquerors in several ways, especially by providing the necessary victuals for widespread local military maintenance (Briant 1988: 178).

The title 'governor' which appears in Aramaic script on some artifacts has prompted some scholars to argue that Yehud became an independent, autonomous entity as soon as the early sixth or fifth centuries BCE. This conclusion is flawed for several reasons, not the least of which is that the term and its meaning are inconclusive. Moreover, the title alone does not preclude the existence of systems of taxation or tribute, nor does it suspend Yehud's responsibility to the Achaemenid Empire.

The fact that the biblical text and the Elephantine papyri contain three mentions of the words 'governors of Judah' favors the notion that such a position may have existed. But what the job entailed, within the context of the Achaemenid Empire ruling strategies and imperial structure, remains unclear. It is plausible to hypothesize that each viable segment of the Empire functioned in a semi-autonomous yet interactive fashion. This is consistent with the material culture and the broader set of ruling strategies of the Persian Empire.

Ezra 9–10 frames intermarriage as a religious and not an economic issue, despite the capacity of exogenous unions to cause profound economic ramifications for Yehudite women denied marriage to Yehudite partners, and for the children of men who were involved in interethnic relationships. Yet it is untenable that the Achaemenid Empire was only secondarily interested in the economy, as Briant argues. The Achaemenid Empire's social structure and governing apparatus functioned to control the means, modes, and relations of production. With semi-autonomous groups comprising the Empire, influences from these smaller groups, in all likelihood, were reflected in the larger whole. For the Yehudite community, control was translated into regulation of reproduction. Certainly, this had economic ramifications.

Achaemenid Ruling Strategies and Yehudite Autonomy

The Achaemenid Empire was neither a kinder nor gentler governing body. Several scholars have argued convincingly that the Empire functioned primarily to ensure its own profit with little apparent concern for its subjects (Dandamayev 1974; Johnson 1995; Ray 1991; Tuplin 1987; Curtis 1997; Kuhrt 1991: 323-425; Kuhrt 1983). Nevertheless, based on the material culture such as the nature of coinage, it is reasonable to conclude that by no later than the 4th century BCE, and probably before, Yehud had joined other entities with colonial provincial status (Meshorer 1967). This semi-autonomous position reflected a less than independent status characterized by trade within the satrapy with Byblos, Tyre, Sidon, Samerina, Gal'aza, Dor, Megiddo, Ashdod, and Ashkelon. To see Yehud as a semi-autonomous unit rather than an autonomous *province*, it is important to note that even the first coins bearing the word Yehud were minted by the Persians rather than by a local governor (Meshorer 1967). And not only did Yehud interact as a trade partner, but also it was subject to the Achaemenid tribute or taxation system. The Achaemenid Empire's economic system offered the opportunity for capital accumulation to a restricted segment of society. The masses were relegated to poverty. Under communal conditions characterized by limited opportunity to a few, intermarriage to foreign wives might well have appeared as an attractive alternative for enhancing wealth, even if it threatened intra-group fragmentation.

Before we conclude this discussion of the social setting in Yehud, let us evaluate the religious ideologies exercised by Yehudites. The goal here is to show the ways in which Yehudite religious views were interspersed in the social apparatus governing the community—namely, in the concept of the בית אבות—and to suggest the need to consider, once again, the role of economics in shaping the relationship between the Persians and the Yehudites.

Several scholars note that some Persian emperors employed compliant local leaders, thus using existing social structures to continue previously established ruling practices (Olmstead 1948; Cook 1983; Dandamayev 1989; Hoglund 1992). For example, J.M. Cook notes that under Cyrus, governors and other state functionaries were not necessarily Persian. Achaemenid kings employed local religious leaders to affirm the Persian population's religious ideologies, thus using indigenous religious practices to ward off and defuse political tensions. Encouraging local cults' customs and facilitating temple reconstructions for several groups besides the Yehudites were two of several means for currying favor with imperial subjects. Interactions with local religious traditions, to the extent that they occurred, reflected multiple concerns on the parts of the Achaemenid leadership. Lindsay Allen notes that Persian rulers violently opposed some local traditions as a result of regional unrest among these groups. Both Xerxes and Cambyses were dubbed intolerant of other faith traditions (cf. Atkinson 1956: 168). Mary Boyce, who argues that Persian leaders from Cyrus's time forward engaged Zoroastrianism, claims also that Darius was the Achaemenid leader who was aligned most closely with that religion. She maintains that he was only secondarily connected to the religion of his subjects (Boyce 1988; Cook 1983). These are not insignificant points. That Boyce links Darius with the Achaemenid structured-tribute program ties religion with political and economic concerns.

Statements such as those found in Isaiah 45 that assert participation by Achaemenid leaders in local religions, lack strong foundation. This is not to say that Zoroastrianism did not affect the religious practices of the imperial subjects. If Achaemenid leaders were Zoroastrian, there may be a link between the strong dichotomization and heavy emphasis on purity in postexilic Hebrew Bible texts, for example (Boyce 1988: 21-31). The negative references attributed to some Achaemenid rulers with respect to the religion of their subjects appear to have been stereotypical or formulaic. These accusations were intended partly to defame the leaders, and to deflect interest in the deities or religion practiced by the Emperors (Allen 2005: 126).

Thus, interactions between royalty and religious leaders frequently reflect intersections that had more economic than religious significance (Dandamayev 1989: 56-68; Allen 2005). Therefore, Isaiah 45, which depicts Cyrus as the savior of the exiled Hebrew peoples, exemplifies a Yehudite response to such the Achaemenid ruling style and must be viewed guardedly (cf. Fried 2006: 374-93). Whereas Isaiah 45 seems to imply that Cyrus enjoyed a special relationship with Yhwh and Yhwh's worshipers, it is more likely that Cyrus manipulated the religious systems in Yehud and elsewhere throughout the empire to maximize cooperation from the local peoples. And his interest in the temple was more political than religious.

Particularities of the בית אבות/בית אב *('father's house'/'fathers' house)*

This Chapter concludes by tying together data in the Babylonian economic texts from the Achaemenid era with other historical information to bolster the argument that the Persian rulers employed a variety of strategies to control the land and resources of their satrapies and semi-autonomous provinces, including Yehud. One such strategy was the distribution of imperial land as gifts to military personnel and local leaders in exchange for the recipients' loyalty to the empire. While the preceding discussion about economics and religion relates to the construction of the Yehudite community, another aspect of community was the pre-exilic origins and foundation of the fathers' houses, a religious kin link that was associated directly with possession of Yhwh's land-gift. The last piece in this discussion is committed to reconstructing Yehudite social structure.

Reconstructing the Social Structure

With the return of exiles from Babylon, the peoples of the land and the returnees faced a new and persistent problem: solidifying a communal identity. Ezra–Nehemiah's accounts of rebuilding the temple and the wall allude to the magnitude of the difficulties created by the inability to establish and anchor a common identity. It is possible to reconstruct limited aspects of the social structure in Yehud both before and after the exile (Kuhrt 1983: 93-94). This can provide insight into the problems associated with establishing a communal social identity.

Many scholars have tried to describe the social structure of ancient Israel or of the postexilic Yehudite community (Gottwald 1979; Lemche 1985; Meyers 1991; Smith-Christopher 1994; Weinberg 1992; Carroll 1992; Dion 1991; Janzen 2000; Bedford 2002). Many of these scholarly discussions focus on the notion(s) of the בית אבות/בית אב. Whether analyzing groups of 50 or more people as a protective agency or as a minimal lineage, the idea of the fathers' house or father's house is a helpful way to describe the networks of extended family groups that constituted first ancient Israelite society, then the postexilic Yehudite communities (Gottwald 1979; Lemche 1985). These networks need not been seen paternalistically. Carol Meyers discusses the term 'mother's house' (בית אם) within the context of several Hebrew Bible texts, including the Song of Songs, Genesis 24, and the Book of Ruth (Meyers 1991: 40).

If the בית אב was the foundation of ancient Israel's pre-exilic community, then it is not a drastic leap to suppose that those who remained in the land and those who returned to Yehud attempted to reconstruct or maintain the viability of this aspect of the social structure. Social scientific evidence affirms this hypothesis. Exile typically requires adaptation to new and often dehumanizing circumstances. The family, which is often at the center of the crisis in exilic communities, must reorganize itself and its system to adapt to a new environment. The stress of exile, which requires establishing a shared and interpersonal context, may result in seemingly xenophobic attitudes by both the exiled and the host societies.

These attitudes are a natural response to trauma: because the experience of exile ranges from unsettling to horrific, even under the least threatening circumstances, it causes a rupture in culture, environment, governmental processes, and history. The return to a homeland is traumatic as well: after enduring the hardship of being taken forcibly from the land and eventually adjusting to new surroundings, reentry into the land opens possibilities for additional disorientation and distress. Under these circumstances, identity reconstruction—individually and collectively—is paramount. Sociological analyses of exiled groups suggest that after resettlement, the Yehudites who were exiled and those who survived in the land established mechanisms for reconstituting their psychosocial identities (Barudy 1989: 724; Shain 1989). Because a sizable diaspora remained in Babylon, Elephantine, and elsewhere throughout the Achaemenid Empire, it is possible that this group exerted influence on the process of collective identity reformulation (Shain 2003: 449-53). The family and group-related interaction provided by religion is a therapeutic recourse that facilitates these processes of intervention (Majodina 1989: 87-88). Therefore, it is likely that the בית אבות and its interpretation of Yahwistic worship functioned similarly in postexilic Yehud. It is not surprising, then, that Torah would loom so large in postexilic literature. Moreover, it makes sense that the parameters of Torah would be reconfigured more stringently than before the exile, as happened with the laws against interethnic marriage that appear in Ezra–Nehemiah. The basis for community conduct and communal identity was reshaped according to the contours of Torah. Now Torah would preserve the community and its ideologies.

One of the primary problems that confronted the new בית אבות was the matter of landownership, which was rare except for the Persian ruling class (Dandamaev 1989). Because landownership served as an important feature of the בית אבות in Persian Yehud and interethnic marriage was an important link to inheritance privileges, access to economic viability, and the construction of gender and class relations, it is essential to understand this basic issue. Thus, it is important to focus attention on the matter of landownership, the local temple, the בית אבות, and the Achaemenid Empire.

Landownership and the בית אבות ('fathers' house')

Land possession was necessary for prosperity in postexilic Yehud. Yet Muhammad Dandamaev, who uses the concept of field rental agreements, argues that 'large-scale landowners and slave ownership' existed among princes and queens following the implementation of Darius's administrative and fiscal structures c. 518 BCE (Dandamayev 1974: 124). These structures, which are described in the Murashû business documents, highlight the economic disparity suffered by the majority despite the semi-autonomous status enjoyed by Yehud. The economic deprivation discussed by Dandamaev may reflect an emergent social crisis set in motion by the Achaemenid Empire's economic policies. Indeed, it may have been one of the primary reasons why it was necessary for the בית אבות to act as a 'mechanism of survival' (Smith 1989: 118-20).

In contrast, Joel Weinberg notes the fundamental importance of landownership, but strongly proclaims Yehud as God's land *de facto*—the sole possession of the בית אבות (Weinberg 1992: 130). Quite simply, Weinberg's conclusion raises the question, how did the Achaemenid Empire utilize its authority over the land in its satrapies? Specifically, did Achaemenid royalty distribute land to some in Yehud at the expense of the larger local society and culture? In Yehud, unlike in other regions of the Achaemenid Empire, landownership and the בית אבות held vast religious significance which had been complicated by the breakdown in community continuity caused by the Babylonian exile. How could members of the father's house obtain land? And what did access of land mean? What did Yehudites have to offer the powerful empire and its royalty? Rightly, Dandamaev calls into question Weinberg's conclusion and asserts that the land could not have belonged to Yehudites. Privileges such as landownership were afforded only to the Persian hierarchy, according to Dandamaev.

I maintain that some segments of Yehudite culture had plenty to offer the ruling Achaemenid Empire. The societal breakdown of bargaining power favored males over females. Independent men in Yehudite culture were not constrained to follow the same set of rules that governed women. Nor did they suffer the same economic plight of unmarried women. The sons of the exiles enjoyed a higher social position with the ruling Achaemenid Empire than did the peoples of the land. Thus, the returnees were likely to enjoy more social and economic opportunities from their privileged access to power. Although Daniel's story depicted a different period than the Achaemenid era, it demonstrates how a deportee may have enjoyed a higher status among his political enemy than in his own homeland (cf. the book of Daniel). Many scholars argue that a significant number of people remained in Babylonia under the Persians. It is not unusual for diasporic groups to lobby political authorities on behalf of their constituents. If the Yehudite diaspora in Persia functioned during Ezra's time as many modern diasporas do, and as it is said to have acted in Nehemiah's day, then clearly the returnees rather than the peoples of the land would have been the beneficiaries of imperial goodwill (Bedford 2002: 150-51; Shain 2003; Schaper 1995, 1997). Therefore, the struggle in Yehud was not between the upper and lower classes, but rather between rival upper-class males vying for a few highly prized opportunities to better their personal economic status.

Achaemenid era documents from a variety of locations provide hints about the empire's economic apparatus. These works refer to the land sales, leases, and rentals; loans for land; home ownership and rentals; field rentals; and other business transactions such as land apportionment and the legal contestation of estates, including land and dowries. Achaemenid Babylonian and Elephantine documents indicate that Persian kings held land rights and determined the limited number of recipients who were his allies (cf. Moore 1935, 1939; Joannés 1982). Furthermore, these texts reveal contemporary and ancient understandings of gift-giving. During the

Achaemenid era, land-gifts were accompanied by an expectation of reciprocity. The gifts entitled the king to taxes, tribute, and military services (Lemche 1994: 120-25).

When we consider titles such as 'potter', 'baker', and 'officials of the king' in tandem with the aforementioned list of financial transactions and agreements important hypotheses emerge concerning social class and economic status (cf. Moore 1935, 1939; Joannès 1982). These data isolate the king as the primary beneficiary of the system and suggest that everyone else functioned to ensure the king's status. The owners of fiefs and a few other citizens were privileged economically but they enjoyed this rank only to the extent that they were connected to the king and promoted his agenda. The existing data also make less viable the conclusion that land belonged to every member of the בית אבות as a normative a part of their membership to the communally-based agnatic band (cf. Weinberg 1992: 61).

In contrast, here I argue that Yehudites may have worked land that was parceled out to them by families who received the properties as gifts from the royal administration. Widengren's discussion accounts for the familial hereditary nature that is attributed to the postexilic בית אבות. More important, Nehemiah 13 affirms the notion that a temple committee was established for the purposes of collecting and administering holy taxes (cf. Schaper 1995, 1997; Spiro 1970). The degree of temple involvement in Yehudite financial matters is unsubstantiated. But the temple personnel could have acted as a managing agency of the land that had been distributed by the royalty, and as the recipients of the land-gifts as the group of local leadership described in Ezra 9 and 10 (cf. Blenkinsopp 1991). Hence, the Yehudite land-workers were more comparable to the feudal tenants in Babylonia during the Achaemenid era than to aspects of Weinberg's בית אבות. It is implausible and unjustifiable to conclude otherwise—to promote the notion that circumstances in Yehud were so drastically different than those in other areas of the Empire. Since all of the land under the auspices of the conquered entities was now at the king's disposal, there is little reason to doubt that Yehud operated so differently than elsewhere in the Empire.

Because marriage included exchanging dowries, the socioeconomic and political significance of gift-giving must be considered here. Gift-giving in the Persian Empire had an undeniable economic value. Therefore, any discussion of marriage and gender during the Achaemenid era must inquire into the relationships between gift-giving, economics, and marriage (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989: 130-33; Brosius 1991). Mary Brosius maintains that Achaemenid kings preferred intrafamilial marriage in order to manage property rights. These arrangements resemble some of the marriages described in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Num. 27). However, despite their preference for endogamous relationships, Israelites, including kings, occasionally established exogamous relationships, or they exchanged their daughters to obtain land or to strengthen political alliances. Consider David's and Solomon's marriages as well as the host of 'wife-swaps' that function as indicators of the political power or positioning in the books of Samuel (cf. also Levenson 1980).

Similarly, men within the Achaemenid hierarchy exchanged their daughters or sisters to extract loyalty from the recipients of these women. For example, there is evidence that two royal women, the daughters of Artaxerxes II, were given in marriage to military commanders (Weiskopf 1989: 22; Brosius 1991). Importantly, before these marriages were solidified or validated as complete, the prospective grooms were required to exhibit loyalty to the crown (Brosius 1991: 141-42). At the beginning stages of the Achaemenid Empire, kings who were establishing and stabilizing their authority needed to be able to quash military revolts by rebellious subjects and ambitious upstarts. To accomplish this, the kings engaged in personal relationships with military leaders. These relationships were formed by giving either a daughter or sister in marriage. But as the Achaemenid Empire matured and provincial subjects became more compliant, marriage alliances were formed at the end rather than the beginning of a noble's military career (Brosius 1991: 141). In addition to receiving a royal marriage partner, the military leaders were granted access to land and precious metals (Brosius 1991: 141-42).

If the sons of the exile represented Judah's elite, as the biblical text states (2 Kgs 25.8-12) then it is consistent to suggest that the sons of the exile or the returnees were those who benefited from the kings' gift-giving and they formulated Yehud's upper class.

It would have been especially important for the Achaemenid Empire to secure Yehud due to its strategic location. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Persian hierarchy exchanged their daughters or sisters and access to land for military service by a designated group of Yehudite men. Considering that Syria and Phoenicia could be destabilized in the event of Egyptian noncompliance, and the value of agricultural products which Yehud was capable of producing, Yehud was very significant in view of its relative size. The Mediterranean Sea coast provided the opportunity for a sizable military presence—both land and sea, a pathway to protect peace or resolve possible disruptions to the Empire's business (Weiskopf 1989: 14-19).

The Achaemenid military was comprised of multiethnic forces (Weiskopf 1989: 14-15; Head 1992). Military leaders had two primary tasks: to maintain order and collect tribute. Where local institutions functioned adequately, they were permitted to continue in their respective communities. The goal was to establish and maintain without disruption the notion of the Persian ruler as 'the great king' (Weiskopf 1989: 14; Tuplin 1987; Head 1992). Therefore, institutions such as the בית אבות were permitted to continue serving its community in Yehud. Every gift signified to the recipient a special meaning. Gifts from the king symbolized his absolute overlordship and the recipient's willingness to be obeisant (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989: 131-33). This point is particularly vital to the intermarriage dilemma in Ezra–Nehemiah because forfeiture of רכוש ('movable property') was the penalty for noncompliance with the edict against intermarriage. Thus, the fact that the רכוש and other gifts were provided by the Persian king(s) (Ezra 1.3-9; 3.7; 5.13-15; 7.7-28; 8.1-36; Neh. 2.4-8) is no small matter. The point is this: while there is no direct evidence, such as a list of royal Persian women who married upper-echelon Yehudite men in exchange for land or other types of property, we know that the practice of recognizing the social, economic, and political ramifications of marriage functioned throughout the ancient Near East. The greatest factor weighing against this type of exchange system is the claim that Persian kings did not give royal women to non-royalty. But proof that non-royal men married the daughters of Artaxerxes II, as noted above, dispels the notion that royal women were never paired with non-royalty. (Conversely, Babylonian prostitutes were used to pay tribute [Herodotus 1.197]). Moreover, there is also convincing circumstantial evidence that marriage was an important means of establishing political and economic alliances, and formidable evidence demonstrating that gifts of land and other valuables were a part of a sophisticated practice employed by Achaemenid kings to ensure loyalty and faithfulness among military leaders and other important men.

During the Achaemenid era, Yehud's בית אבות was probably a splintered group that did not anchor the postexilic community as the organization had done in the pre-exilic context. The fractured nature of the בית אבות resulted from inequality, including unequal access to land. The rupture caused by the exile and the return of some who may have viewed life somewhat differently than those who remained in the land was expressed in material as well as ideological differences. Materially, there were gradations of wealth and poverty in Yehud and throughout the larger Empire. Most people probably had little wealth, and many throughout the Achaemenid Empire, even in Yehud, suffered under the strain of taxation imposed by the Empire (Neh. 5). The Empire needed policies that brought maximum production without imposing excessive coercion (Hoglund 1991: 59; Tuplin 1987). The appeal to a specific ethnic group's religious ideologies was important. The use of priests as imperial functionaries, the act of embracing projects to rebuild temples, and self-portrayal as the people's protector were among the successful and valuable tactics employed by the Persian kings. Additionally, the royal military forces or mercenaries and other Empire officials composed of local ethnic groups encouraged local obeisance (cf. Porten 1968: 41-61). The economic hierarchy reflected in Ezra–Nehemiah directs attention to the mixed-marriage conflict as the primary reason for the economically and politically inferior status of the Yehudites in comparison to their overlords (Ezra). The intermarriage dispute illuminates the fierce struggle over limited resources and few leadership positions. Both conflicts could result in reduced possibilities for economic homeostasis.

The threat of excommunicating from the בית אבות members who refused to abide by the edict against intermarriage conveys messages on several different levels. It illustrates disagreement among members of the upper echelons of Yehudite society. It shows that relations could have been exacerbated between those managing the imperial lands and those working them, or those without an opportunity to either manage or work the lands. Finally, the threat of excommunication may address the degree to which relations within the community had been fractured due to the exile, and touches on the difficulty in resurrecting an old institution, the בית אבות, to deal with the new realities introduced by Achaemenid hegemony.

The Achaemenid economy, including in Yehud, functioned as parts of a larger world system. By assembling the combination of artifacts and sociopolitical and economic theoretical analyses, Yehud emerges as a social entity governed day-to-day by elites who were responsible to the satrap and ultimately, the Achaemenid king. Surplus goods were used for trade, tribute, and taxes. Exogamous marriages, which granted access to opportunities for a few men also introduced economic problems for many, including unmarried Yehudite women. When possible, commoners worked to earn a livelihood, but apparently this was not always possible.

The next Chapter analyzes marriage as it has been depicted in the Hebrew Bible and in the Aramaic papyri from the Jewish colony at Elephantine, as well as from Babylonia. These texts are helpful in assessing marriage as an economic tool, though a full exploration of marriage also considers its linkages to gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.

Chapter 4

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND ARAMAIC PAPYRI

Chapter 3 laid the foundation for a plausible hypothesis about the events leading to and resulting in the edict against intermarriage. Attention now turns to the functions of marriage as it relates to economics and gender roles as well as sexuality and ethnicity. From early texts that have been attributed to the Yahwist to those considered postexilic Hebrew Bible literature, marriage functions as a primary mechanism for fashioning social relationships that joins difference(s) and leads eventually to dominance. Attaining economic power in Persian Yehudite society was one such expression of dominance. A second expressive means of dominance is captured in gender relations. Marriage was portrayed as a relationship between the bridegroom, Yhwh, and his chosen people, represented by ancient Israelite men. This allusion highlights gender concerns, because only males were eligible recipients of Yhwh's promise. But it also points fleetingly to an unacknowledged homoerotic relationship. Thus, the metaphoric marriage may have sexual implications. In turn, sexuality emerges in relationship to ethnicity; associations between the foreigner and deviance surface throughout the Hebrew Bible.

The postexilic notion of the ancestral houses or fathers' houses was imperiled by inequitable access to landownership. Unlike the pre-exilic institution, the postexilic בית אבות lacked control over land. Indeed, the privileged few who were among the sons of the exile were differentiated from the peoples of the land by their access to land. In response to local events, the peoples of the land apparently decided that communal membership would be delimited based in part on a new interpretation of marriage laws. Therefore, after the exile, stricter regulations about interethnic marriage emerged, perhaps as a means to retain what was left of the pre-exilic בית אבות or to reconstitute the community. Significantly, pre-exilic Judahites had been permitted to intermarry with certain groups according to the Deuteronomic Code, but the ban in Ezra prevents the practice entirely.

Ezra–Nehemiah reflects the toll of the economic burden experienced in the Yehudite community from taxation (Ezra; Neh. 5). It also reflects normative expressions of a postexilic community in the aftermath of trauma.

As such, these accounts represent an attempt to come to terms with discernible intragroup differences that were rooted in different communal experiences. The economic problems and ethnic issues that emerge in Ezra–Nehemiah are schisms about belongingness that were cast in diverse socially constructed ways. One means of recapturing a semblance of unity between the sons of the exile and the peoples of the land was prescribing new and more stringent rules about marriage. By controlling marriage, the community could designate its membership within the extended family network, thus, redrawing the boundaries of communal and cultural identity. Ostensibly, reunification—the reconstitution of unity—was viewed as a part of the solution to the economic and other struggles that confronted the community. To some extent, then, reassembling the בית אבות may have been viewed as a *strategy* for survival rather than a 'mechanism of survival' (Smith 1989: 118-20). The בית אבות provided the foundation for unity, but unity was not guaranteed.

The goal of Chapter 4 is to elaborate further on the significance of economics, gender, and sexuality in ancient marriage customs. It is also necessary to highlight mentions of ethnicity in Hebrew Bible narratives. Although interethnic marriage was not prohibited outright until Ezra's ban in the postexilic period, ethnicity emerged as an economic tool in a kin-based society even in the earliest accounts of marriage. Thus ethnicity is an important—and sometimes overlooked—marker in these texts.

Marriage Customs in Biblical Narratives

The goal of this section is to establish a general sense of the customs associated with marriage throughout ancient Israelite and Judahite writings, and how economic, gender, and ethnic considerations formed an integral part of these customs. This section also considers מהר, a marriage custom that may be traced from early texts to later writings such as the contracts from the Jewish colony at Elephantine during the Achaemenid period. The Elephantine documents, which are discussed below, have special value because they are extrabiblical and reflect the activities and culture of Egyptian Jews close in time to those depicted in Ezra.

Economics and Gender in Hebrew Bible Marriage

The Elephantine papyri and other documents from the ancient Near East reveal insights about the economic features of marriage. These documents do more to validate the Hebrew Bible than do its narratives alone, because they represent evidence of actual rather than fictive events during the Achaemenid era.

The previous Chapter dispelled the idea that the בית אבות had complete control over either the land to which they may have had access, or the financial benefits resulting from access to the land. I suggested that the few elites who had obtained the right to use land received this privilege through an elaborate gift-giving system in which a relatively few men enjoyed land access through a commitment of loyalty to the Persian kings' military or other functionary service. This exchange program included exogamous marriage wherein Persian women married Yehudite men. As a result, Yehudite women who had no hope of obtaining marriage partners faced very difficult economic straits—worse than those that confronted unmarried Yehudite men. The laws that allowed women to inherit land provided a legitimate economic reason for exogamous marriage. In other words, the Aramaic contracts from Elephantine that discuss women's right to own property make it possible to imagine the advantages of exchanging not only one's sons, but one's daughters, in arranged exogamous marriages. Thus, arranging the marriages of one's offspring to outside groups became even more attractive because, for example, a woman could become an eligible heir to her father's or husband's property in the event of divorce or a man's death.

This discussion of gift-giving supposes that political and financial ramifications were prominent and powerful motives in Achaemenid era marriages. Indeed, scholars make impressive cases for recognizing the economic dimensions of marriage both in the Hebrew Bible and in the Aramaic marriage texts from Elephantine.

Biblical and other cultural documents concerning marriage provide insight into a system of exchanges that seemed to occur routinely as part of the marriage rituals throughout the ancient Near East. These traditions include מהר ('brideprice'), מתן ('marriage gift[s]'), and שִׁלּוּחִים ('parting gifts'). These three customs are considered here to provide evidence that marriage had serious economic ramifications, and to link these economic matters to gender directly.

Of the three customs, מהר, מתן, and שִׁלּוּחִים the Hebrew Bible refers to מהר—'purchase-price or price to obtain a wife', as part of the marriage ritual more frequently than does either of the other two forms of exchange (Brown 1979: 555). According to Elias Bickerman, מהר served two distinct functions: (1) the exchange of money or goods between the groom and his family on the one hand and the bride's father (or the other appropriate male agent) and her family, which may imply a transaction of ownership between the two families; or (2) a gift exchanged between the groom and his family and the bride's father's family. The gift apparently compensated the bride's family for the economic deficit caused by the loss of the bride's labor in a patrilineal society, because once she was married the bride left her father's family and joined her spouse's household (Bickerman 1976: 202; Porten 1968; Milgrom 1976). The distinction between these two meanings of מהר are important: the second definition focuses on economic compensation for the bride's family while the first one highlights the notion that the bride is purchased and thus is owned by her spouse.

Two tacks may be taken to assess whether מהר was practiced as part of the marriage rituals in Persian Yehud. First, biblical texts which mention this custom can be dated. A detailed discussion of dating biblical texts involving מהר is beyond the scope of the present study. However, previous findings about the dates of these documents are valuable for discerning how long מהר may have existed as part of the marriage ritual in ancient Israelite culture. The second means for assessing whether this tradition was an aspect of ancient Israelite marriage is to consider other ancient documents that refer to מהר. Hebrew Bible texts attesting to מהר, and similar data concerning marriage in other ancient Near Eastern civilizations, suggest that the custom probably existed very early in ancient Israelite culture and continued to function as late as the Persian period (cf. 1 Sam. 18.25; Exod. 22.16; Gen. 34.12).

Extrabiblical texts emerging from a variety of ancient Near Eastern cultures support very early origins of מהר throughout the ancient Near East as well as in ancient Israel. Indeed, the practice is so old that it predates the emergence of ancient Israel. For example, the *Hymn to Nikkal* from Ras Shamra mentions the custom utilizing the Ugaritic equivalent to the Hebrew מהר. A. van Selms defines *thr* as the act of paying 'the compensation gift in order to get a girl as a wife' (van Selms 1954: 28). Similarly, William Robertson Smith equates the comparable Arabic *mahr* and Syriac *mahra* to the Hebrew מהר. Both simply mean 'brideprice' (Smith 1885: 79). The Elephantine marriage contracts also reflect the Aramaic semantic equivalent of מהר, מהרא. The Aramaic texts are especially important because they not only confirm the existence of the tradition but link the practice to the Jewish colony in Egypt during the Achaemenid era.

Three biblical narratives concerning marriage allow insight into מהר as a feature of marriage in ancient Israel. These narratives all have a distinct *Sitz im Leben*, but they purport to depict the pre-exilic period. Of the three, the story of Dinah appears to have emerged in the postexilic era. In the story of Dinah's rape, Shechem, Hamor's father, offers מהר מאד to Jacob and Dinah's brothers so that he can take Dinah as his wife (Gen. 34; also cf. Exod. 22.15). Shechem and Hamor act consistently with the law, which states that מהר must be paid to the appropriate man in a woman's life if that young woman has been raped by one to whom she is not betrothed (Exod. 22.15). The next verse in the text notes that if the father absolutely refuses to give his daughter as a marriage partner, the man is required to pay the father a shekel for the young woman (cf. Exod. 22.16). Both this law in the Book of the Covenant and the actions attributed to Hamor and Shechem make plain the existence of מהר in the ancient Near East. This example is particularly striking because Hamor and Shechem are from another ethnic group. They are Hivites, not Israelites.

In Genesis 24, Rebekah's story confirms a similar or linked tradition. In this story portraying pre-Israelite lifestyle, Abraham's servant brings gold nose-rings weighing one-half shekel, and two bracelets worth ten gold shekels, on his journey to find Isaac's wife. Although these gifts are for Rebekah, the storyteller indicates specifically that the servant brings with him 10 camels and other goods, including gold and silver vessels, from Abraham. It is reasonable to surmise that the latter constitutes מהר for Rebekah's family.

The Dinah story utilizes two terms: מהר ('brideprice') and מתן ('marriage gift[s]'). Some scholars argue that these words are synonymous and interchangeable (cf. Dussaud 1935: 142-51 for a fuller discussion). This notion is based largely on the gift-giving practices that feature the twin ideas—reciprocity and obligation—mentioned in the discussion of gifts provided by the Persian kings to inspire and ensure loyalty. Politically inspired gift-giving could arouse cynicism when coupled with maintaining control over people in a vast empire. This may account for why Dussaud emphasizes the familial aspect of ancient Israelite marriage, for example.

Dussaud suggests that מהר and מתן represent two entirely different aspects of a larger and more complex three-part gift-giving ritual which includes שׁלוחים ('parting-gift' or 'dowry'), as its last component. Customarily, שׁלוחים was given to the bride by her father after she had married and left home. The entire concept of 'bridal purchase-price' is incompatible with Dussaud's understanding of the gift-giving ritual tied to marriage. In contrast, he argues that the system features three major elements: (1) reciprocity and compensation; (2) consecration of the two families who are involved in the marriage; and (3) gift-giving as 'dowry' (Dussaud 1935: 143, 145, 151; Smith 1885). Van Selms's discussion of the third component is important to investigate because it presents a challenge for Dussaud. While the term שׁלוחים exists in several ancient Near Eastern languages including Classical Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, and Aramaic, all of the references in the biblical text refer to 'parting-gifts' given by non-Israelite parents (van Selms 1954: 33-34). For example, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, provides Zipporah with a parting-gift after she married Moses (Exod. 18.2). One of Egypt's Pharaohs gives a parting-gift to his daughter (1 Kgs 9.16). Caleb provided his daughter land (Josh. 15.16-19). However, it is not directly identified as שׁלוחים although the term clearly existed. In light of this, is it possible to establish Dussaud's position? Perhaps it is. Dussaud's tripartite custom was so well known to ancient Israelite and Yehudite men that the writers and editors addressing them at various points in their history thought that discussing the three parts was redundant or unnecessary. If ancient Israelite's penchant to borrow from and adapt some customs from its older neighbors is combined with knowledge that several ancient Near Eastern languages have a common vocabulary and well-established gift-giving traditions associated with marriage, then Dussaud's theory is not only interesting but plausible.

For more than two centuries, many European scholars have tried to determine the role(s) of the bridegroom's fee to the function of מהר. Gideon M. Kressel notes that Western anthropologists' analyses of non-western social customs such as brideprice have led to biases and incorrect conclusions concerning the practice (Kressel 1977: 441). Certainly, Dussaud arrived at a much more positive notion of the custom compared to either his contemporaries or modern critics, who are especially likely to view brideprice harshly. Jack Goody argues that the ritual of exchange was designed to ensure the bride's well-being throughout the course of the marriage rather than represent her value as chattel (Goody 1990: 344-47, 364). In this light, Dussaud may have surpassed other scholars of his time.

In fact, to a great extent, Dussaud arrived at his position about brideprice in contradistinction to viewpoints of other scholars. In 1893, J. Benzinger wrote about ancient Israelite marriage as a part of his work entitled *Hebräische Archäologie*. He, like Dussaud, appreciated a cultural connection between Bedouin and Israelite marriage customs. Both authors analyzed ancient Israelite marriage ritual against the background of the larger ancient Near Eastern culture from which it is said to have emerged. Benzinger acknowledged also the difference between מהר and מתן. For Benzinger, מתן was the gift given by the bridegroom to the bride as an act of sealing the marriage contract, while מהר was the bridal purchase-price (Benzinger 1894: 139).

Benzinger construed the bridal purchase-price much differently than did Dussaud. Benzinger wrote the following about the Bedouin tradition after which, he claims, ancient Israel patterned its ritual: 'Der Hauptpunkt ist die Feststellung des Kaufpreise und der Aussteuer der Braut, wobei es ohne das unerlässliche Handeln nicht abgeht' (Benzinger 1894: 138). He later notes, 'Die Stellung der Frau wird dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass sie ein Eigentum, ist, erst ihrer Eltern, die sie verkaufen, dann ihres Mannes, der sie um Geld erwirbt' (Benzinger 1894: 138-39). Although Benzinger's views were bold and not well received by all, they accounted for the status of biblical women realistically. In addition, Benzinger approached the economic aspects of biblical women's societal positions after seemingly having given remarkable forethought to the matter.

Millar Burrows's study of ancient Israelite marriage modified Dussaud's position (Burrows 1938: 9-15). Burrows accepted the importance of compensation and reciprocity involved in marriage negotiations. He focused on the economic aspects of marriage as compensation rather than as exchange in the sense of a sale (Burrows 1938: 30-51).

As I have tried to establish throughout this work, economics presented very tangible concerns for ancient peoples. For this reason, women's contributions to a potential marriage are important to consider. Women represented favorable potential economic power in several ways: (1) they worked in the fields as well as in the household; (2) women of childbearing age represented potential labor power in their reproductive ability; and (3) when young women were of marriageable age, their family's wealth made a difference in the properties, both moveable and immovable, that she brought to the marriage. Martha Roth's discussion of Neo-Babylonian dowries helps to underscore the practical ways in which gift-giving aided wealth transfer (Roth 1989–1990). According to Roth, no two dowry inventories were exactly the same. Women routinely introduced various goods to the household, including daily utensils and furniture, especially if they were married and lived separately from their mothers-in-law (Roth 1989–1990). Women's dowries supplied garments and jewelry for themselves, and could include real estate (Roth 1989–1990). Though Roth's work concerns Mesopotamian cultures, Caleb's land and spring gift to Achsah at her marriage suggests that similar gifts were given as a part of ancient Israelite marriage customs. Additionally, ancient Israelite traditions affirm the need to secure wealth transferred in marriage. For example, Moses' instructions to Zelophehad's daughters required that they keep inherited land within the clan (cf. Num. 36.2, 6, 10-11).

Undoubtedly, young women represented economic potential that benefited their old family and their new one. Discussion of the marriage ritual(s) illustrates the range of economic problems experienced by women due to gender disparity and social class inequity. Women who were not linked to men confronted economic poverty, and there were limited avenues to remedy their dilemma outside of marriage.

The function of marriage in Israel and Yehud was, then, related closely to economic, and gender matters. Especially, references depicting מהר as compensation payable to raped women's fathers in exchange for the women's lost virginity and resultant diminished marital eligibility *could be viewed as buying a chattel* (cf. Exod. 22). But evidence provided by ancient Near Eastern legal codices such as the Law Code of Hammurabi helps to justify an alternative perspective for understanding this type gift-giving within the context of the marriage ritual. Throughout ancient Near Eastern legal codes, laws frequently equate monetary compensation with a large variety of physical losses—losses experienced by men and women alike, from damaged limbs to stolen property. (For 'The Law Code of Hammurabi' and examples of this phenomena, cf. Pritchard 1969).

Thus, even though the exchange may be construed as a financial transaction, conflating the existence of bridal purchase price and slavery is inappropriate and inaccurate. The problem is more complex. The social construction of class in ancient Israel meant that women without men—raped unbethrothed women, virgins, widows, divorced or barren women—variously lacked economic means. In light of the overall twin concerns of reciprocity and obligation which were entailed in gift-giving in the ancient

Near East, it is sensible to support Dussaud's assertion that bridal price was a three-part ritual emphasizing familial affiliations rather than financial relationships and ownership of a woman. The major theme emerging from this discussion is a valuation system that was embedded in the social construction of ancient Israel and which reflects class-based gender bias.

Viewing bridal price and providing associated gifts at marriage along a class-gender axis is defensible according to gift-giving decorum in the ancient Near East, but it is also supported by the ways in which legal codes from the ancient Near East, including ancient Israel, discuss the valuation of humankind and other species generally. All human beings, crops, animals, and inanimate objects such as houses had associated monetary values (cf. 'The Law Code of Hammurabi', 'The Laws of Eshunna' and 'The Laws of Ur-Nammu' in Pritchard 1969). The cultural convention that caused men's lives to be valued differently than women's lives constitutes the overriding source of gender prejudice. Transactional value was related to bridal purchase price to the extent that raped, unbethrothed virgins and widows were the responsibility of their families. Concomitant economic concerns were shared by not only the fathers and families of these women, but also by the women.

These matters appear throughout the Hebrew Bible. From Laban's contrived scheme to get his daughter Leah married to Jacob, to Tamar's clever ruse involving Judah (Gen. 38), and Naomi's coaching Ruth into a relationship with Boaz (cf. esp. Ruth 3.1-6), all of these tales have two qualities in common: (1) the women's long-term economic security, and (2) the economic stability of her family. Thus, dowries had the capacity to secure a woman's future in the event of divorce from her spouse, or in the event of his death. Because the schema seem to value women differently based on their circumstances but do not interject the standard in valuation concerning men leads to the conclusion that the problem is gender-based. The assertion that the issue has a class component comes from the dire straits that confronted certain unmarried women and their families.

Because intermarriage was permitted between ancient Israelites and some other ethnic groups in the pre-exilic era, as late as the Deuteronomic Code, c. 621 BCE, the question becomes: what occurred between 621 BCE and 450 BCE that caused the writers of Ezra–Nehemiah to ban the practice outright (Ezra 9–10; Neh. 13) (cf. Hayes 1999; Cohen 1983). Moreover, why did Jewish writers continue to forcefully reject intermarriage in post-biblical writings? The Babylonian exile and the advent of the Holiness Code intervene.

Yehudites had suffered loss of autonomy and the land-gift from Yhwh. Pragmatically, as would be the case for any agrarian culture, economic calamity ensued. Mixing ethnic entities meant introducing the influence of other religious traditions and customs to the populace. Because the loss of land was associated with the exile and both were construed as a religious indictment by Yhwh, the most efficacious way to effect a reversal of fortunes was to declare a moratorium on interactions with the ethnic Other. Because going beyond prescribed boundaries to have intercourse with foreigners represented the most intimate interaction possible, it therefore became an apt metaphor for the separation that was required. The lesson from the exile was clear —*difference results in deviance*—thus, intercourse with the Other must be dispensed with entirely to avoid the risk of pollution. Decrying intermarriage was more than what might be perceived as racial or religious prejudice (Barudy 1989; Malkki 1995). Restoration required separating from any partner but Yhwh. The call to separate from the Other signified a deep resolve to re-order life and reestablish a position of favor with Yhwh; one with political security and economic prosperity.

The gift-giving practices of the region interfered with Yehud's path to restoration. Men loyal to the Persian king could establish themselves economically, and receive access to land in return as a result. For these men, there was no need to separate from foreign wives. In fact, to do so would jeopardize their standing. Yehud's communal problems revolved partly around the strained relationships caused not only by the exile, which constituted a breach in social identity boundaries, but by the ways in which some of the community members may have sought to regain their economic footing—through devotion to the Persian king. Therefore, while engaging with the Achaemenid Empire and accepting reciprocity from the king may have provided opportunities for a few select Yehudite men, it left Yehudite women unmarried and their families in positions of economic hardship. Individual economic need and the reconstruction of communal Yehudite social identity represented conflicting and competing interests. For example, if marriage to a partner outside of the prescribed group brought wealth to a Persian Yehudite family, then such marrying-up set at cross-purposes the individual goal of economic stability and the collective goal of reestablishing communal identity. The ideological problems confronting the union of the peoples of the Land with the returned sons of the exile made even routine decisions more complex.

To further understand the meaning and importance of social identity for the Yehudites, and how interethnic marriage threatened this identity, we must explore in greater detail the meaning of ethnicity both within and outside of marriage. The prohibitions against intermarriage formally began in the postexilic context but existed throughout the Israelites' existence. For example, the postexilic books of Esther, Ruth, and Jonah provide a wide spectrum of opinions about ethnicity and intermarriage. But these are not the only narratives that yield insight into understanding ethnicity in the Hebrew Bible; smaller passages and references contribute perspectives, also. Sometimes these texts offer competing views. For example, the book of Jonah expresses mixed sentiments about ethnicity. Jonah is characterized as obstinate and unwilling to deliver God's message to Nineveh's people. Yet God persists in urging Jonah to complete this mission. The people fast, pray, and repent because of Jonah's message. Ultimately, the people are spared. Jonah is represented as a hesitant deliverer of God's message to foreigners. Yet, God demonstrates grace toward the ethnic Other.

Other Hebrew Bible passages convey more–ominous perceptions about ethnicity. The few verses committed to conveying the story of Lot's daughters are an interesting case in point. The narrative does not identify these women by any name other than Lot's daughters. However, the text specifies the names of Lot's daughters' children, Moab and Ben-ammi. The story reveals that the two sons would become the forefathers of the Moabites and Ammonites (Gen. 19.37-38). This is important because it immediately establishes Lot's grandsons as foreigners. Indeed, the text implicitly predicates the men's status as not only foreigners but enemies based on the taboo sexual acts attributed to their mothers: both women had conceived their offspring through incest with Lot, their father. Thus, Lot's daughters' sons are considered Otherly (Gen. 19.30-38). They are perceived as the ancestors of entirely different nations because they were conceived through unsanctioned sexual practices. Tellingly, Lot escapes blame for his actions: Hebrew Bible narratives typically attribute whorish, harlotrous, and other deviant sexual behavior to females, but not to their male partners. For example, the incest in the story of Lot's daughters is attributed to Lot's daughters but not Lot, the consenting adult. The daughters' aberrant sexuality results in the development of two ethnically Other people, both of whom become among Israel's greatest enemies (Bailey 1995).

In the Hebrew Bible, references to ethnicity emerge in several contexts to keep the plot to the story flowing or to provide some other technical aspect of constructing a narrative. Wit and humor are intertwined with very sobering, even somber accounts of the planned genocide of Israelite or Yehudite people by their ethnic rivals. Humor and wisdom are prominent features of the Books of Exodus and Esther, which speak clearly to ethnic concerns (Berlin 2001; Clines 1984). Addressing the king of Egypt, the two Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, explain their reason for not executing male Hebrew children upon birth as he had ordered. They tell the king that the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: Hebrew women deliver so vigorously that the midwife misses the birth. This self-deprecating ethnic contrivance saves many newborn males, the most famous of whom is Moses. In addition to such heroism, these women manage to mock without his knowledge the king who enslaved them (Weems 1992). God finds favor with the two witty and wise Hebrew midwives.

A similar combination of wisdom and humor exist in the book of Esther as a two-pronged strategy for preventing Achaemenid era genocide. David

Clines references Talmudic support to affirm his claim that male authority in Esther 1 is humorous. The rabbinic claim is based on the notion that male authority in antiquity was inherent (Clines 1984: 283). Adele Berlin argues that humorous elements in the book of Esther reflect a Hellenistic influence found throughout contemporary Greek comedy (Berlin 2001). The apparent humor in Esther surfaces throughout the narratives as the author employs satire and irony to mock the Persian king and his underlings in one instance after another.

Numerous, even smaller mentions laced throughout the Hebrew Bible's narratives imply concern about Otherness by providing scant but vital inferences about ethnicity. While characterizations such as gentilic designations may appear immaterial, their aim is to arm the reader with enough data to situate characters in their societal context (Berlin 1983: 33-36). Therefore, these brief mentions of ethnicity, which occur with little or no further elaboration about a character, serve as foundational guideposts for the reader. For example, Ruth's designation as a Moabite in contrast to Naomi's designation as a Judahite (Ruth 1.4) and Esther's identification as the cousin of a Jewish man named Mordecai (Est. 2.5, 10) in comparison to the Persian king to whom she is married (Est. 1), give the reader essential contextual elements for understanding the ensuing plots.

More elaborate concerns with ethnicity relate to marriage. Not every mention of intermarriage in the Hebrew Bible is negative. As Sara Japhet notes, 'A positive attitude toward mixed marriages is clearly implied in the book of Ruth, and plays an important role in the historical concept of Chronicles' (Japhet 1985: 105 n. 11). However, several passages clearly express negative sentiments. Many of the texts in which intermarriage arises as a source of conflict date to the postexilic era. However, earlier writings also reveal controversy over ethnicity. For example, problems related to interethnic marriage emerge in a number of the Hebrew Bible texts that are traditionally considered pre-exilic (cf. Gen. 24; 27; 34; Num. 12; Judg. 14; 1 Kgs 8.15, 24; 11.1-43; 16.31). For instance, in Genesis 24, Abraham sends his servant to Abraham's homeland to select a spouse for Isaac. The text recounts that Abraham directs the servant not to select a foreign wife, suggesting that ethnicity is one of Abraham's core concerns. Naomi Steinberg's in-depth analysis of the Genesis marriage stories argues that kinship concerns are an important part of Abraham's decision (Steinberg 1993: 7). However, she acknowledges also that the internal perspective that she utilizes is geared to examining marriage on a familial, not a national, level (Steinberg 1993: 7). Of course, kinship and ethnic concerns are not mutually exclusive.

Interestingly, Rebekah, Isaac's wife, echoes the apprehension of her father-in-law, Abraham, about the ethnic origin of her sons' wives. She registers her disenchantment about Esau's selection of a Hittite wife: 'Then

Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?"' (Gen. 27.46). In addition, Rebekah seeks to prevent Jacob from following his brother's example by sending Jacob to her kin so that he can marry properly. Similarly, in Judges, Samson's parents bemoan their son's desire for a Philistine wife: 'But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among your kin, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?"' (Judg. 14.3a). In Samson's case, the writers and editors justify marriage to the Philistine woman by explaining Samson's decision to marry exogamously is part of a divinely inspired plan to subdue the Philistines (Judg. 14.3a). Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the writers and editors criticize marriage to foreign women. Both King Solomon and King Ahab are infamous for their exogamous marriages (1 Kgs. 8.15, 24; 11.1-43; 16.31). Even though Miriam's and Aaron's reaction to Moses' marriage to the Cushite woman is less frequently cited as an example of a problematic interethnic marriage than is Ahab's marriage to Jezebel, or Solomon's interethnic marital relationships, the biblical text demonstrates that Moses' family does not welcome the marriage (Num. 12.1-16).

Ethnicity and marriage arise in a more complicated manner in the story of Dinah. This is, in part, because Shechem and Hamor are willing to do whatever is necessary to right a situation that may have been initially misconstrued anyway (Gen. 34). This tale, which is usually referred to as the rape of Dinah by a foreigner, engages both the problem of intermarriage or ethnicity and gender. After Shechem purportedly rapes Dinah, he and his father, Hamor, plan for Shechem's marriage to Dinah. Jacob and his sons are offered an exchange of their sons and daughters for the receipt of Hivite sons and daughters. They are also offered an economic alliance with the Hivites. The proposed exchange is suspiciously akin to the one described in Ezra 9, and to the economic problems confronting Persian Yehud. Dinah goes out among the Hivites and is pursued by Shechem. The narrative makes abundantly clear that Dinah is comfortable among the ethnically Other peoples. However, much like those who objected to intermarriage in Ezra, the sons of Jacob clearly want nothing to do with intermarriage under the terms suggested by Shechem and Hamor. They devise a plan by which they kill Hivite men, rape their wives and daughters, and take Hivite possessions as plunder. They engage in the very behavior they have accused Shechem of perpetrating against their sister. While the Hivites' devastation is considered vengeance for the supposed rape of Dinah, the problem for Jacob's sons may not be that Dinah was raped, but that they viewed Shechem's sexual relationship with Dinah as ethnic trespassing. It is important to note that the language of the text suggests that Dinah was 'taken' by Shechem, phraseology frequently applied to men who married women but with no associated connotations of deviance or violence. Lyn Bechtel's analysis of the Dinah story raises similar questions about whether or not the sexual encounter between Dinah and Shechem ought to be interpreted as rape or a different type of unsanctioned sexual activity (Bechtel 1994: 31). Bechtel argues that Jacob's sons' reaction to Dinah's sexual relationship with Shechem is related to Shechem's status as an 'outsider' rather than to rape (Bechtel 1994: 23-27). She concludes that the sons react so strongly because they perceived Dinah's socially unsanctioned sexual activity with Shechem an 'uncircumcised outsider', as a multifaceted threat to their social structure in several ways (Bechtel 1994: 32-34).

It should be noted that Shechem and his father offered to Jacob's family מהר מאד ('an abundant bride price') for Dinah, so that she could become Shechem's wife. But by every indication in the text, the two principals loved each other. Allen Guenther rightly argues that when women are taken forcibly, 'there is no exchange of dowry or bride-price or any of the other redistribution of wealth that normally takes place at a marriage or any other redistribution of wealth that normally takes place' (Guenther 2005: 399). Indeed, Jacob's sons' unjustifiable actions (even by Jacob's standards) are attributed to Shechem, Hamor, and the Hivites based on ethnic grounds. It is in some ways comparable to those who believed that foreign women and their children should be exiled. To the extent that Jacob's sons' intense wrath is connected to the perception of Shechem as an ethnically Other outsider, the theme of the narrative is tied to an intense desire to establish social boundaries, and is driven by the same desperate urges noted in Ezra–Nehemiah.

Many biblical scholars have argued, if not explicitly then implicitly, that the goal of prophetic texts was to restore the terms of the covenant between Yhwh and the people of God. A lengthy discussion of these texts is beyond the scope of this study. But because the whorish woman is represented in biblical prophecy as a foreign woman, it is important to show the relationship between the lewd woman in prophetic texts and the strange or foreign wives in the books of Proverbs and Ezra–Nehemiah. The two concepts may be viewed as interrelated especially because scholars increasingly are dating prophetic writings later and later, indeed frequently to the Persian period, the same time of Ezra–Nehemiah. Thus, the views of prophecy's function must be reconsidered as well.

In the metaphoric marriage depicted throughout Hebrew Bible prophecy, the foreign woman is depicted as a great threat to the covenant relationship between Yhwh and the people of God. The mere mention of a marital relationship implies intimacy with the wayward, whorish or strange woman. Several Hebrew Bible scholars treat this metaphor in prophetic literature (Yee 2003; Weems 1995, 1992; Setel 1985; Weems 1989; van Dijk-Hemmes 1993; Brenner 1993; Day 2000; Weinfeld 1996; Zvi 2004; Žižek

1989). However, several prophetic texts readily link lewd sexuality, which is normally attributed to the female partner, with infidelity in the metaphorical marriage. The whorish acts described are in many instances associated with the perception of foreigners' sexual practices. For example, Ezekiel writes:

> Have you not committed lewdness beyond all your abominations? See, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about, 'Like mother, like daughter'. You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. Your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger, who lived to the south of you is Sodom with her daughters. You not only followed their ways, and acted according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all of your ways (Ezek. 16.44c-47).

Similarly, other prophets, among them Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, repeatedly describe marriage by using a metaphor that depicts feminine and foreign behavior as lewd with the power to pollute and profane the people, their land, and their relationship with God. Thus, despite the occurrence of intermarriage in pre-exilic Hebrew Bible accounts and the lack of prohibitions against intermarriage with some ethnic groups prior to the postexilic era, intermingling with the ethnic Other resulted in inferior, even deviant, behavior.

Although the harlot–wife metaphor dominates, it by no means appears in all prophetic writings. Trito-Isaiah broaches the turmoil in Persian Yehud from another angle. Trito-Isaiah's words are seemingly conciliatory to foreign men who have committed themselves to Yhwh and Yhwh's service. The prophet remarks:

> Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from his people'; and do not let the eunuch say 'I am just a dry tree' …and the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath, and do not bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayers for all peoples (Isa. 56.3-8).

Neither Isaiah nor Ezra represents mutually exclusive perspectives of the community in conflict. Trito-Isaiah provides for the admission into the community foreign men who are committed to Yahweh's service (Schramm 1995: 112-25). On the other hand, Ezra 9–10 focuses on the elimination of foreign women. Foreign women were feared because of their perceived ability to seduce and lure Yehudite men to foreign gods. Foreign men were not so feared. Prophetic texts were traditionally viewed as addresses written to particular communities. Thus, although the tone of Trito-Isaiah in the oracle quoted above is ostensibly less harsh than Ezekiel (Isa. 56.3-9), Trito-Isaiah deals with the same cultic issues prevalent in Ezekiel and Ezra (cf. Ezek. 16; Ezra 9–10).

To summarize this section thus far: several texts illustrate the diverse ways in which ethnicity is broached in the Hebrew Bible. The first portion of this section features discussions of Jonah; the story of Lot's daughters; the midwives, Shiphrah, Puah, and the Pharaoh; and the negative marital imagery that focuses on ethnicity and is found in several prophetic texts. The purpose of these mentions is to validate the claim that ethnicity was a main concern of the writers and editors of the Hebrew Bible and of their audiences. Even though the tales about Lot's daughters and the midwives are briefer than Jonah's story, sexual and racial matters emerge as part of the overall concern over ethnicity. The story of the midwives deals with class- and race-related ideologies. But perhaps more significant to the development of Jewish ideologies is the concern over unsanctioned sex in the case of Lot's daughters. This narrative most overtly and unequivocally draws together the notion of ritual purity, which focuses on sexuality, ethnicity, and exile (cf. Klawans 1995: 289-92).

The second part of this section on ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible discusses the Kethuvim's books of Ruth, Esther, and Proverbs, and the prophetic book of Malachi. Examining these passages highlights the value of the brief mentions of ethnicity discussed above. Reactions to intermarriage establish a foundation for the claim that ethnic mixing was a consistent concern for biblical writers.

Several postexilic Hebrew Bible texts appear in literary genres other than narratives. Proverbs, which is written in terse maxims, yields the best example of postexilic Hebrew Bible wisdom literature to broach the matter of foreign women and thus, by inference, issues related to intermarriage. Proverbs depicts the foreign woman as a whorish prostitute who is ready to ruin Yehudite men. She utilizes her feminine sexuality to lure unsuspecting Yehudite men from the path of righteousness. Warnings against the foreign woman directly connect non-Yehudite women with strange sexual behaviors that are deemed evil. These words of caution are particularly important to the present study because the Hebrew adjective נכר (literally, 'foreign', 'alien', or 'non-Israelite') is employed in Ezra–Nehemiah nine times (Ezra 10.2, 10-11, 14, 17-18, 44; Neh. 13.26-27) to identify the women who are to be exiled from Yehud. This adjective appears in parallel construction with אשה זרה ('strange or whorish woman') (Prov. 2.16; 5.20; 7.5) and is attested in grammatical construction with the Hebrew phrase אשת רעה ('evil woman') (Prov. 6.24). אשת נכריה ('foreign wife') is also paired with זונה, the Hebrew noun for 'prostitute' (Prov. 23.27). Use of this adjective with the Hebrew noun אשה ('woman' or 'wife') describes not simply non-Yehudite women or women from another ethnic group but expresses negative judgments about the sexual practices of the 'outsider'. The texts in Proverbs describe interaction with foreign women as destructive and polluting. The sexual ways of the strange woman, when introduced into young Yehudite men's lives, can only result in evil and misfortune for the entire people.

A discussion of intermarriage in the book of Malachi ties the notions of faithfulness and covenant with 'the one God' to the idea of marital fidelity. Intermarriage, according to Malachi, is equivalent to infidelity. Since intermarriage implies the introduction of foreign gods, the 'one God' who seeks godly offspring is obscured or usurped by the other gods (McDonald 1987: 604). Malachi implores the people of God to remain faithful to one another and thus, faithful to their (one) God (Mal. 2.4-17). Beth Glazier-McDonald cogently argues that intermarriage and divorce are two aspects of one issue that centers on the Yehudite obligation to be loyal to both God and ethnic group. While she does not identify all of the factors named in the present study as prominent features of intermarriage, she does point to the possibility of improved economic status as an important incentive for men to engage in interethnic marriage. In the Hebrew Bible marriage metaphor, Malachi 2 identifies Yhwh as the wronged wife, that is, the Yehudite women who were forsaken and replaced by foreign wives (Glazier-McDonald 1987: 609). Yhwh is associated with the wronged party elsewhere in prophetic literature as well (e.g., Hos. 3; Jer. 3.4). However, that party is normally the male spouse. Israel, Judah, and sometimes Jerusalem are usually depicted as the harlot-wife.

This is significant for three reasons. In the Hebrew Bible marriage metaphor: (1) the female spouse is generally portrayed as the partner responsible for committing indiscretions, such that infidelity and prostitution are bound with the signifier 'woman'; (2) feminine sexuality is linked with lewdness; and (3) the responsible party remains the female spouse. (In the cases detailed in the books of Hosea and Malachi, the woman is foreign as she is in Proverbs and Ezra–Nehemiah.) Intermarriage in the context of the kin-based Yehudite society was perceived as a major threat to the family. Therefore, it challenged the sociopolitical underpinnings of postexilic Yehudite community (Brenner 1993: 116).

Besides the book of Ruth, which details the marriage between a Moabite woman and Israelite man, the book of Esther involves sanctioned interethnic marriage between the Jewish woman, Esther, and a Persian king. The marriage between the Moabite Ruth and Naomi's kinsman, Boaz, arguably benefits Naomi more than it does Ruth. Without Ruth, Naomi returns to Bethlehem as a widow with neither sons nor the ability to bear sons. Thus, Naomi faces a harsh life because she has no viable economic base. In the Esther story, the genocide that threatens Esther and her ethnic group serves as a powerful justification for Esther's marriage to this ethnically Other man. Esther's marriage to the Persian king provided vastly improved opportunities for land,

and therefore better economic standing for Esther's family. While the story is not considered a retelling of a historical event, it nonetheless outlines the possibility for such a scenario to take place. This lends further credence to the notion that Yehudites viewed interethnic marriage as a costly arrangement that enhanced economic opportunities of a few men at the expense of women in the group and thus threatened intra-ethnic social cohesion.

The book of Esther's story of interethnic marriage attends to a number of expressions resulting from the problems associated with Otherness during the Persian period. These Otherly qualities include economic or class-based distinctions; prescribed patriarchy on the grounds of gender; and differentiation between peoples based on ethnic superiority.

A close reading of Esther details more than simply the rise of a young Jewish woman to Persian royalty. The story begins with a decadent feast by the Persian king. The king calls for his wife, Vashti. The rabbis report that the king mandates that Vashti appear naked, wearing only her crown. While there is speculation concerning the details of this mandate, we are informed that the Queen refuses the invitation, for which she is dethroned. By the end of Esther 1, the king deposes Vashti and issues a decree warning all of the women in the kingdom to obey their spouses. Difference and domination emerge immediately regarding Vashti's unwillingness to be subjected to the king's humiliation. Vashti rejects the notion of being a trophy for male sexual pleasure. For rebuffing the king and challenging his attempted domination, Vashti loses royal status. However, through her demotion she is elevated as an example for women throughout the kingdom. Perhaps Vashti is the prototype of Achaemenid women, and her demise, if it can be so labeled, a means of threatening women who dared to be so self-willed and audacious. From Esther, it is evident that men presumed to reign over their women's sexuality and behavior generally.

Initially, Esther is presented to the reader as Mordecai's niece who is under his authority. However, at the most crucial point in the Esther story, Esther decides to take her fate into her own hands. Ultimately, Esther's plan exceeds any simple hopes of lifelong security that Mordecai has designed in his ruse to marry his niece to the Persian ruler. Mordecai's plan, though well-intentioned and prudent financially, is limited. The king, on the other hand, is slow-witted. By assuming that he has controlled upheaval in the kingdom by deposing Vashti, he opens the door instead to a non-Persian, non-royal woman who manipulates him to murder 75,000 Persians. Thus, rather than quelling the masses of women by sanctioning male dominance in every household, the king exposes thousands within the dominant ethnic group to reprisal from the ethnically 'inferior' Other people.

Over the last 20 years, biblical scholars have often classified the Esther story as a historical novella. More recently, Adele Berlin discusses the relationship between Greek comedy and the book of Esther (Berlin 2001).

While the tale contains some elements that may be conceived of as comedic, it is couched in satire and irony. As noted earlier, ethnic sensibilities make highly improbable the notion of Esther marrying the Persian king. The ethnocentricity of both groups in addition to the issues of landownership and women's rights of inheritance also weigh against such a marriage. Stan Goldman depicts the writing in Esther as ironic rhetoric (Goldman 1990). His analysis is valuable because it encourages Esther's readers to identify the absurdities in the text. Yet rather than dismissing the tale as fictive, a serious reading illuminates the distress in Yehud during the Persian period. This rhetoric is evident in the Vashti-motivated edict to women. While the decree is termed foolish and by Clines humorous, the edict is only laughable to the extent that the reader senses the incredulity of the nobles seeking to (re)institutionalize male domination over other autonomous beings (Clines 1984). In this respect, an imaginative reader might wonder if Achaemenid-period males felt threatened by their female counterparts, or if their attempt to legalize authority over women was a response to lost control in other aspects of their lives, including the economic and political spheres.

For average Persian-period Yehudites, the Persian Empire imposed disruption on the peoples of Yehud in similar ways that males dominated females. Thus, rather than creating hierarchies of oppressions, it is profitable to reconcile these situations as interdependent gradations of Othering operating along a continuum of strategies utilized by people individually and as communities to solidify identities. That these identities were situational and multifarious serve to complicate the matter.

The irony in Esther heightens in the tale of the king's relationship with his court advisers and again in Esther's relationship with the king. The king is portrayed as an incapable, powerless fool who cannot even rule over his wife. His advisers convince him to issue a decree against defiant women through the kingdom, only for the king to turn around and select a new queen—one who is as rebellious as the one he had dethroned. Moreover, the king does not realize that he has chosen someone who is not fit to be royalty, according to Persian tradition (Brosius 1991). His reward for this choice is the vindication of the ruled by the hand of the ruler.

Intrafamilial marital unions rather than interethnic marriages were the preferred route of the Persians. The rhetoric of Esther's rise serves to highlight a larger problem, according to the writers and editors of Esther, namely, the suffering of one ethnic entity at the hands of another, more powerful one. The story unmasks the subjects' hope for an ironic twist of fate, such as the unlikely marriage of a Persian king to a Jewish woman. From Vashti's dethronement to Esther's rise and demise of 75,000 Persians at the hand of Jewish peoples, the book of Esther wrestles constantly with issues of difference and domination. Interethnic marriage is but one component of this complex struggle.

Evidence from the Elephantine Marriage Documents

The Aramaic documents from Elephantine record interethnic marriage and stipulations for both spouses in the event of death and divorce, including instances of women possessing land and other assets. From this array of binding contracts, it is clear that the legal system governing Jewish people in Egypt permitted women a broad array of rights and privileges. For example, the Document(s) of Wifehood record(s) the marriage date as well as the names of the families of the bridegroom and bride (cf. Yaron 1958; Greengus 1959). The agreements discuss the bridegroom's approach to his prospective father-in-law or brother-in-law. The bridegroom pays מהר, and the bride brings with her a dowry composed of personal garments, household utensils, and in one instance a bed, in other instance a chest to store the bride's clothing. and in a third case, a house and land.

Just as Martha Roth acknowledges regarding Neo-Babylonian dowries, it should be noted that none of the dowries or fragments of lists from Elephantine are identical. It is plausible that the Elephantine contracts, like the Neo-Babylonian dowries, reflect the fact that the brides' families' variable wealth made each dowry different (Roth 1989–1990: 1-3). For example, Mibtahiah inherited the house of her father, Mahseiah, in 460 BCE. Mahseiah, a Jewish resident of Elephantine, agrees with Mibtahiah's spouse that if the spouse enriches the plot of land and house, he is entitled to half of the house as compensation for his labor should Mibtahiah divorce him. Otherwise, the house and land are the sole property of Mibtahiah. Additionally, should Jezaniah, the son-in-law, die after the divorce, the property may be given to Mibtahiah's children.

All of the marriage contracts make financial stipulations for the long-term security of both parties and their offspring. From these documents and others that have emerged from Elephantine, women's participation in the public sphere appears evident. Women are purportedly entitled to the property that they bring into their marriages, including their מהר and, should their husbands divorce them, a monetary figure that is established at the time of marriage. What is striking about the last notion is not only that women are protected in the event of death and divorce, but that they have the right to initiate divorce. In such a case, women are responsible for paying a prearranged sum to their former marital partners. Moreover, the marriage documents protect a woman against bigamy, polygamy, and inheritance by her husband's offspring, by the husband's future wives, and by the husband's family in the event of his death. According to these agreements, sons and daughters shared the rights to their parents' property after the parents' death.

The debate over the views held by René Dussaud and a group of German scholars on the purpose of brideprice emerges again within the context of Y. Muffs' findings from the Aramaic contracts. For example, Muffs' elaborate discussion of the Aramaic phrase לבבך וסיב ('and your heart is pleased') reviews the different legal contexts in which this term occurs (Muffs 1973: 176-77). His analysis demonstrates that this phrase appears in the Aramaic papyri in sales of land as well as in the exchange of מהר between the groom-to-be and his prospective father-in-law (Muffs 1973: 30-56). Muffs illustrates how the phrase may be construed as a change of ‘control’ over the daughter/wife rather than the purchase of the daughter/wife, while seeking to establish simultaneously the independent status of Elephantine women (Muffs 1973: 55). Without commenting on the viability of Muffs’ argument about women’s status in Elephantine, readers can discern strength in both Dussaud’s perspective and that held by the so-called German school which might be represented by Benzinger or Eberharter (Benzinger 1894; Eberharter 1914).

Muffs proposes that the clause in question dates to the legal tradition found in conveyance documents from Sippar prior to Hammurabi’s time (c. 1728 BCE). The use of the semantic equivalent of the Aramaic in the Elephantine marriage contracts parallels the phrase in Old Babylonian contracts, including marriage agreements, from Sippar (Muffs 1973: 63-85). If Muffs is correct about the adoption and use of this archaic style, then his distinctions between the contracts and their function in relationship to women’s daily lives is plausible and nuanced. On that premise, it is not facile to note that according to these legal documents, women and men *ideally* were to be treated with more equity than is evident either in the Hebrew Bible’s legal tradition or in its stories that are said to reflect life in Persian Yehud. Thus, although the circumstances outlined in the marriage contracts are more favorable for Jewish women in Elephantine than in any surviving documents concerning women’s lives in Yehud during the same period, it is nonetheless difficult to interpret these documents at face value because such interpretations may lead to incorrect conclusions about marital relationships during the Achaemenid era in Elephantine.

Two other matters resurface in the Elephantine papyri. First, men’s economic status is jeopardized by women’s inheritance rights. Second, interethnic marriage, which is evident at Elephantine as in Yehud, placed familial properties at risk should the male spouse die without first fathering a male heir. In addition, if the married couple gave birth to girls, the daughters were eligible for part of the inheritance. Upon a daughter’s marriage, a portion of the family property was at risk of loss. Therefore, unless all of the children were males or the daughters did not marry, some segment of the family inheritance was lost—that is, unless the families in a given clan married only within their clan.

This raises another important series of issues involving the practices of marrying next-of-kin. Although the Hebrew Bible condones next-of-kin marriage, modern readers of these texts rarely acknowledge it. Such marriages are frowned upon as incestuous by modern standards, but the Hebrew

Bible writers and editors stigmatize neither Abraham and Sarah nor Isaac and Rebekah for their intra-clan relationships. In the instance of Zelophehad's daughters, Moses directs these women to marry their kin to protect their land inheritance.

If the population under the auspices of the Achaemenid Empire did not own land, as was hypothesized above, then hereditary land, at least in the normative sense of the word, was not at issue. However, the absence of traditional landowning status does not eliminate the notion of commoners mimicking the lifestyles of royalty and the nobility. Several studies pertinent to Achaemenid-era marriage suggest that next-of-kin marriages prevailed to eliminate the loss of familial real estate (Brosius 1991).

The stories of interethnic marriage in the Hebrew Bible and the Aramaic marriage documents yield an array of interconnected points for consideration. The customs elaborated in the Elephantine contracts are closely linked with the marriage systems that can be pieced together from the Hebrew Bible. The groom-to-be paid a price to the prospective father-in-law. This payment addressed the economic security of the bride, groom, and the bride's family. The language of the contracts infers women's rights to inherit property (Eskenazi 1992: 27-31). Tamara Eskenazi's analysis of the Elephantine marriage contracts echoes the discussion in this Chapter. But her argument that the dissolution of interethnic marriages represents an affirmation of Yehudite women is problematic. Economic need outstripped tradition. Eskenazi points out that intermarriage occurred in the Jewish colony at Elephantine, but the available records do not indicate that divorce was considered necessary on the basis of ethnicity. It seems that different socioeconomic dynamics were at play in Elephantine than in Yehud. The information from the Aramaic marriage contracts evokes more questions than they provide iron-clad certainties about the day-to-day affairs of average people despite the uniformity of style and format in the documents.

Interethnic marriage and the representation of the Other in economic and gender-related oppressions are not readily apparent to a contemporary reader of the Aramaic contracts from Elephantine. Modern readers can but speculate as to whether social-class and ethnic concerns, for example, limited entitlement to legal rights. On the other hand, there is greater justification for considering the degree to which Persian women may have been juxtaposed to Yehudite women through manipulation by Persian kings. According to Mary Brosius, Persian marriage customs permitted royal men to marry only royal women, to prevent jeopardizing the legitimacy of male heirs to the throne (Brosius 1991). However, this does not preclude or negate the possibility that Persian women may have been given in exogamous marriage as a part of the larger gift-giving ritual acknowledging loyalty. Achaemenid rulers who needed a diverse constituency of men to maintain order throughout the vast Empire needed to appeal to these men. If Yehudite men were bereft of economic means, including land, as has been argued, then they may have been willing to violate the boundaries of their community to capitalize on an opportunity to secure land. Likewise, to keep order throughout their kingdom, Persian kings were willing to reward loyalty with land. But the Persian kings had other considerations. They wanted to keep land within their grasp. To realize these twin concerns of control over the kingdom's diverse population, and power over the real estate that constituted the Empire, it is plausible that these kings gave royal women with the land grants. Because the normative path for exerting power over land was intrafamilial marriage, giving a woman with the land would not only establish dominance over the peoples in the kingdom, but ensure intergenerational governance over the land-gift. The combination of gifts would ensure that the Achaemenid Empire could maintain authority over royal lands as well as the diverse population of people who constituted the Empire.

The Hebrew Bible exhibits a range of treatments concerning women and marriage traditions generally. These customs undergo changes that are expressed in hostility against foreign women, particularly in the postexilic literature. This statement requires qualification. Although marriage customs are enunciated in the legal texts and in marriage events discussed in the Hebrew Bible, the prophetic and other literatures in the Hebrew Bible use an extensive body of additional marriage imagery. If the entire corpus of Hebrew Bible writings is assessed for information leading to oppressive treatment in heterosexual partnerships, then detailed consideration of this powerful and prevalent harlot-wife metaphor in the Hebrew Bible is necessarily a part of any thorough investigation of marriage in the Hebrew Bible. The overwhelming message of these postexilic biblical documents, the Aramaic papyri, and data from the Achaemenid and other eras reflect deep concerns about landowning and inheritance as well as notions of ethnocentrism and sexism. The problems raised in Ezra–Nehemiah concerning interethnic marriage in Persian Yehud more or less fit into a pattern of Othering in antiquity. Interethnic marriage in Ezra 9–10 represents a specific expression of dominance by the 'in-group', one designed to establish group boundaries in the face of significant threats to group identity (Allport 1979: 29-67). Sander Gilman confirms my suspicion that the stereotyping described in biblical and other ancient texts functions fundamentally as a coping mechanism to help people bring order to an otherwise chaotic world (Gilman 1985: 15-18; Allport 1979: 189-205). Amy-Jill Levine writes similarly concerning exile, Diaspora, and the book of Tobit: 'Emphasizing the acute threat to identity posed by the exilic collapse of boundaries and then diffusing that threat by re-inscribing distinctions, the book of Tobit brings stability to the unstable world' (Levine 1992: 105).

Gilman asserts that models of control are linked to social images of status and meaning for the individual, or in this instance, the group (Gilman

1985: 20). Therefore, when a group experiences anxieties such as the loss of economic and political control, in addition to the devastation of its social order, as is the case in Ezra 9–10, the group's response is to project its anxieties onto the Other, thereby depicting or stereotyping the Other as having lost the control that the group itself has suffered (Gilman 1985: 20).

Analyses of portions of the Hebrew Bible and extant texts such as the Elephantine documents and information from Persian marriage customs explain further the relationships between ethnicity and marriage from several different cultural milieus in the ancient Near East during late antiquity. The point of this Chapter was to explain how marriage in Persian Yehudite society was related to concerns about economics, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. The goal was to situate the argument for why ancient Yehudites responded to intermarriage in Ezra–Nehemiah as they did, and to contextualize that response in a viable theory.

The next Chapter addresses two major outstanding matters. First, I lay out how certain methodological questions have become the standard by which all others are measured. The result has been a severely narrow range of 'acceptable' research queries and methodologies. These limitations are apparent in the history of interpretation of Ezra 9–10, which is a major part of the Chapter. Second, I present an anthropological and narratological-ideological analyses of Ezra 9–10.

Chapter 5

An Other's Readings of Ezra 9.10–10.18

I have suggested that the exile caused Persian Yehudites to be encumbered by diminished socioeconomic and political autonomy and to endure significant psychosocial stresses. Anthropological and sociological studies on the results of exile on newly formed communities of exiles help to establish the plausibility of these impressions. I have also suggested that it is difficult to understand the concerns expressed in Ezra 9–10 without appreciating the role of ethnicity. The Yehudite community described in Ezra 9–10 raises both the racial and religious specters of ethnicity by mentioning biologically defined understandings of the Other, however remote (Ezra 9.1-2), as well as religious concerns that are signaled in Ezra's speech (Ezra 9). Whereas it is possible to argue that these are contemporary categories that should not be forced on an ancient text, both biological and religious components of ethnicity are united in the Deuteronomic Code (cf. Deut. 21.10-14). Similar connections between race, religion, and marriage appear in the books of Chronicles and in several postexilic biblical and non-canonical works such as the book of Jubilees and the documents from Qumran.

Our analysis thus far, then, presents Persian Yehudite society as grappling with a multitude of potentially competing needs. In part, the Yehudite dilemma was complicated because it involved not only groups whose individual members were struggling to re-establish individual postexilic identity, but the merging of these groups into a single expression of collective identity was at stake. Discussing the period in which rabbinic Judaism developed, Joshua Levinson notes how discourses of identity were regulated to protect ethno-religious boundaries (Levinson 2000: 344). This included guarding and defending communal boundaries by regulating the community's dominant fiction. In so doing, community leaders were able to better establish and differentiate between the insiders and the outsiders, and provide an adequate explanation for why these boundaries were necessary (Levinson 2000: 344).

At this point, attention turns to the anthropological and narratological-ideological readings of Ezra 9–10.

An Anthropological Reading

Since Martin Luther, some readers of the biblical text have believed that the inspired Word is discernible—with or without professional training—by the Spirit. Given the need for functional biblical scholarship, like all academic disciplines, to employ self-corrective discourses, the anthropological reading that follows is intended to counterbalance aspects of such past readings of Ezra 9–10 by using a more rigorous analytical framework. I employ anthropology because it facilitates establishing the literature in reality (Bal 1994: 26). Anthropology's emphasis on the spoken word also allows insights into particular narrative contexts based on specific, sometimes minute textual information (Bal 1994: 26-27; Clifford 1983). Together, anthropology and narratology present a complementary methodological approach because they are 'constantly and polemically intertwined' (Bal 1994: 32).

Both biblical scholarship and anthropology have suffered from problematic aspects of western hegemony, namely, imperialism and colonialism. Anthropology entered a period of critical introspection in the 1960s during which scholars debated the methodologies they were using when analyzing other cultures and the unspoken assumptions that often accompanied these analyses (Ortner 1994: 372). According to James Clifford, the impetus for this introspection was political and social upheaval by the African diaspora that challenged racism, imperialism, and colonialism in the United States and throughout the world (Clifford 1983: 122). Shortly thereafter, a long-standing movement for equal rights gained new respect for women, as did appeals for the rights of gays and lesbians.

Biblical scholars have been slower to self-correct. Indeed, many biblical scholars scoff at the notion that correction may be necessary. Because subject-oriented narratology and anthropology have in common with biblical exegesis the desire to draw from the narrative 'the special relationship between people—individuals socially embedded and working collectively—and their language: relation[s] or representation' narratology and anthropology seem to be appropriate exegetical companions for scrutinizing Ezra 9–10 (Bal 1994: 33).

I will follow a polemic of negotiations that identifies and stresses points of historic and interpretative differences, noting that the agenda of each rendering of a biblical text legitimately has several political referents (Bhabha 1994: 25-26). In the process, I will compare the poetic metaphor in Ezra 9–10 with physical imagery, a challenging but not insurmountable task (Mitchell 1986: 49-50).

In *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, Victor Turner defines religious ritual as that which legitimizes. These words have enormous significance in the context of Ezra 9–10 (Turner 1974). For example, Ezra's mourning as a part of his ritual is more than an expression of 'personal disappointment' (Myers 1965: 78). Following Turner's logic, it appears more likely that the elaborate ritual functions to legitimatize the absolute ban on intermarriage that Ezra imposes but does not appear in earlier legal codices in the Hebrew Bible. Additionally, the mourning seems to represent the boundary shift that is in play during the early postexilic period. This accounts for why Ezra's speech changes from first-person to third-person. It also explains anthropologically why he situates this instance of intermarriage within the context of Israel's longer history. According to Turner,

> …Religion and ritual, it is well known, often sustain the legitimacy of social and political systems or provides the symbols on which that legitimacy is most vitally expressed, so that when the legitimacy of *cardinal social relations* is impugned, the *ritual symbolic system, too, which has come to reinforce such relations ceases to convince*. It is in this limbo of structure that religious movements, led by charismatic prophets, powerfully reassert the values of communitas, often in extreme and antinomian forms (Turner 1974: 248, emphasis mine).

Clearly, an important portion of the early Jewish community's social values and boundaries was being articulated in Ezra's edict, and the highly stylized nature of his ritual was commensurate with the magnitude of this epic social change.

Turner also defines metaphor. He writes, 'Metaphor is, in fact, metamorphic, transformative. "Metaphor is our means of effecting instantaneous fusion of two separated realms of experience into one illuminating iconic, encapsulating image"' (Turner 1974: 25). Turner notes about metaphor: 'it is likely that scientists and artists both think primordially in such images; metaphor may be the form of what M. Polanyi calls "tacit knowledge"' (Turner 1974: 25). By 'tacit knowledge', philosopher Michael Polanyi meant what is known about the second of two notions is implied by the first. If Victor Turner is correct and metaphor is both a force for change and a type of tacit knowledge, then the implications of the harlot–wife metaphor are precarious. Turner describes his perspective of metaphoric structure as aligned with I.A. Richards's 'interaction view' (Turner 1974: 29). This depicts metaphor

> [a]s two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their *interaction*… This view emphasizes the dynamics inherent in the metaphor… The two thoughts are active together, they 'engender' thought in their co-activity. Hence, metaphors are 'multivocal symbols', whole semantic systems, which bring into relation a number of ideas, images, sentiments, values, and stereotypes. Components of one system enter into dynamic relations with components of the other (Turner 1974: 29).

In other words, what men in antiquity knew about women or wives based on the harlot-wife metaphor from the Hebrew Bible was minimally implied or indicated from their knowledge of whores. Thus, the harlot-wife metaphor was not an idle image then, nor is it now. Inasmuch as the image is repeatedly rearticulated, as

> [a] sign, then, it is not a thing but an event that takes place in…historically and socially specific situation. Sign events take place under specific circumstances and according to a finite number of culturally valid, conventional, yet not unalterable rules. The assumption of polysemy, including the radical version of it in dissemination, *does not ignore power relations*. On the contrary, it emphasizes them: since there are no definitive limitations on the meanings of signs, the responsibility for which meanings it is that win the game is entirely social and political (Bal 2001: 71, emphasis mine).

As one of the primary metaphoric vehicles of the Hebrew Bible, the harlot-wife metaphor presents a narrow, unflattering view of women and womanliness. She is the object of men's gaze, the justified recipient of violence. Eliding these two metaphoric elements likely had great significance for the recipients of Yhwh's pronouncements. Not only was the harlot-wife metaphor important to the hearers' relationship with Yhwh, but it had significance for developing male views and values, as well as female assessments of themselves.

The basic concern of Mieke Bal's ethnographic system is to establish 'the cultural life of different human societies' (Bal 1988: 51). Bal maintains that 'literature has, by its linguistic and cultural nature, a mediating function between the individual and social motivations' (Bal 1994: 62). She asserts that language is culturally validated and is 'utterly individual and utterly social in its functions as a tool that bridges the gap between' the two types of motivation (Bal 1994: 62). Here I employ two of three analytical strategies identified by Bal, followed by a series of questions applied to the text that are not unlike her own.

An examination of terminology and an analysis of ethnographic context follow. The idea is to establish a relationship between the classifications of groups and their roles in the narrative and in the culture. By linking terminology to the function(s) that characters serve, this analysis allows for an appreciation of the cultural context of the text, and an identification of power relationships. In her discussion of Sisera's death, for example, Bal examines שפטים ('judges') as a key concept that relates to the political, judicial, social, and military structure of the community (Bal 1988: 51). Following Bal's lead, the terminology of Ezra 9–10 presents several appropriate concepts for analyzing gender, class, ethnic, and economic power relations. These include: השרים ('the officers', 'princes'), הלוים ('the Levites'), בית אבות ('fathers' houses'), עמי הארצות ('the peoples of the lands'), בני הגולה ('the sons of the exile'), כהנים ('priests'), נשים נכריות ('foreign women'), and ילדים

('children'). The anthropological reading relies on an appraisal of these leaders that is signaled by these terms. Moreover, examination of the social code reveals that the text obscures gender problems because the use of the third-person masculine plural pertains not only to a collective of men, but to all groups including both men and women. The duplicitous nature of the language makes the text all the more complex because it highlights questions about whether the subject is men only or a more heterogeneous group. If the subject is limited to men, then questions may be raised about the identity of the intended beneficiary of the edict against intermarriage. Is the concern a few rogue men who tried to take advantage of the community to meet their own individual needs, or is the viability of the entire community at stake? Let us interrogate the text to identify the locus of speech, the network of sight, and the ideological center (Bal 1991: 164).

Douglas A. Knight argues that in ancient Israel, the concept of individual rights *per se* did not exist (Knight 1994: 95-100). Knight suggests that communal concerns governed fundamental decisions made in ancient Israel and Persian Yehud. Knight's premise may be valid generally, but it does not hold in every context. Women and men functioned in different socioeconomic and political spheres in ancient Israel. Thus, they had different social, economic, and political obligations. Gendered obligations coupled with fractured motives borne out of economic distress upon the exiles' return to Yehud seem to have presented more than adequate motive to undermine any normative communal spirit that Knight describes as having guided ancient Israelite culture overall. Especially considering the economic element in the intermarriage dispute, and women's reliance upon men in ancient Israelite marriage custom generally, it is unlikely that the third-person masculine plural nouns in Ezra 9–10 describing the powerful persons who reported problems and negotiated their destiny also refer to a heterogeneous group. Thus, the notion of communal good and equality, which had become corrosive, was likely supplanted by a hierarchal schema in which men occupied powerful offices and held authoritative titles. Individual rights dominated the agenda and the subject of discussion is upper-class men vying for economic advantage (Ezra 10.12-18). In late antiquity, women functioned as 'a "muted group" that was made inarticulate by the lack of language with which to communicate their particular sense of society and its relationship to the totality of experience' (Gould 1980: 38). As such, women's needs could not be fully addressed under the rubric of communal needs because they were infrequently articulated. Although Persian Yehud's ethos may have been developed with less emphasis on individuality than in contemporary western culture, the fact remains that the Hebrew Bible 'was most likely written by male literati, with a male readership in mind, and primarily for readers and re-readers who were bearers of high literacy and mainly, if not almost exclusively, male' (Zvi 2004: 365). There is, therefore, little reason to argue that writings such as Ezra 9–10 represented the entire community.

After all, the texts were written, preserved, and utilized by males without so much as a word written or edited by females or any Other voice. In fact, it seems more probable that these leaders of the community had little in common with the masses at all, whether they be male or female, not only because of gender differences, but economics, ethnicity, and perhaps sexuality. It is vital to acknowledge that God's voice and direction(s) were also mediated by these same men. The anthropological and narratological readings are subject-oriented appraisals of the leaders. Therefore, we should ask if Ezra 9–10 expresses a genuine affinity for the welfare of the entire community, not just the upper-class, free, land-owning or property-controlling males. Inasmuch as contemporary readers cannot answer this concern definitely, judgment about individual or collective rights is an issue to be established rather than an assumption *a priori*. But if collective rights are at issue, why do key responses in Ezra 9–10 obliterate the masses by depicting them as virtually faceless, unified, powerless, and passive objects?

The designations used to identify the actors in Ezra 9–10 differentiate between the priests, Levites, officers, and other men, most of whom supposedly accept Ezra's edict. In addition to the narrator, the text mentions Ezra and Shechaniah, along with the two named objectors with their supporting cast of Levites. The relatively wide range of Hebrew Bible vocabulary identifying the individual groups participating in the mixed-marriage scandal, including the priests who report it to Ezra, signals the reader to examine not only the breach in purity but the magnitude of the problem.

The expansive vocabulary utilized by Ezra's authors and editors also calls attention to pervasive impurity among bureaucrats. Mieke Bal discusses narratology's ability to disentangle intertwined ideologies. She notes also that narratology implicitly helps readers view otherness through sameness. She writes, to the extent that language is informed by male ideology, thereby repressing females, narratology aids in developing a view of otherness (Bal 1994: 32). To the degree that Ezra 9–10 ostensibly discusses the bureaucrats' interaction with foreignness highlighted by their inability to 'separate themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abomination' (Ezra 9.1b), Ezra, too, has been unable to separate himself from the Persian King. He is the king's emissary, living in Babylonia rather than in the land provided by Yhwh and with the people of God. Thus, even as Ezra shapes the contours of the debate banning foreign women, he implicates himself in the matter.

Contemporary commentators on Ezra–Nehemiah pay little attention to the distinctions made between the priest, Levites, officials, rulers, and the other groups identified in the text. I raise the point here to recognize the magnitude of the circumstances created by impurity in Persian Yehud. Given the sparse data generally provided in Hebrew Bible narrative, the designations of these specific leaders provoke inquiry into the hierarchy within the social structure. Daniel Smith, David Clines and H.G.M. Williamson broach the matter to some extent; Blenkinsopp to a lesser degree; and Jacob Myers makes the least substantive comments on these classifications (Blenkinsopp 1988; Williamson 1985; Smith 1989; Clines 1984; Myers 1965). Except for the possibility that the writers are engaged in hyperbole, how else can we explain the inclusion of this list? Questions concerning the Persian chain of command emerge, as do inquiries into the local sociopolitical, economic, and religious structures. Persian royalty controlled the land, which was distributed to loyal benefactors. Were these benefactors among the constituencies named in the list of officers who are guilty of the abominable act? Lastly, who represents whom as Yhwh's metaphoric bride? This is a nagging but crucial issue for בני הגולה ('sons of the exile' or 'golah community') and עמי הארצות ('the peoples of the lands'). The peoples' collective identity is formulated not only in relationship to each other but in relationship to Abraham's seed, because it is to Abraham and his descendants that the promise of land inheritance is made.

Prompted by the catastrophic news of intermarriage, Ezra reacts by pulling out the hair on his head and in his beard, mourning, and fasting publicly. The only other example in biblical literature comparable to Ezra tearing out his hair is recorded in the Additions to Esther (C 12-13). This text portrays Esther ripping out her hair as an act of bereavement and dismay over foreigners, specifically her intermarriage to the king (C 23-30). The fact that the Additions to Esther C shares these similarities with Ezra 9–10 highlights the great anxiety expressed over intermarriage in some segments of the postexilic Yehudite community. The Additions to Esther clearly indicates that the intermarriage is a 'duty' that is silently despised by Esther but performed and tolerated in order to rescue God's people from certain destruction. I argue that Ezra's sign-act expresses and represents the same type of intense conflict depicted in the Additions. Ezra's community experienced two vital needs: securing economic survival and obtaining such survival while striving simultaneously to differentiate itself in order to redefine Yehudite social identity.

The wrongdoing in Ezra 9 is reported to Ezra, the priest. There is no distinction between the community's secular and religious concerns. Ezra arrives in Yehud, where he engages the people and instructs them in the Law. After having remained there for four months, according to dates recorded in Ezra 7.9 and Ezra 10.9, his journey culminates with repentance in proportion to the colossal impurity that has been reported. Ezra understands Yehud's situation as consistent with a history of similar misbehavior by the people of God. It is curious that although Ezra, a seemingly prestigious and perceptive priest, is present in Yehud for an extended time, he is ignorant of his associates' horrible misdeeds. Rather, Ezra needs informants to update him on the spiritual lives and daily conduct of men and women with whom he had presumably interacted. H.G.M. Williamson holds that reading Ezra 9.1 with Ezra 10.3 reveals that Ezra had successfully addressed mixed marriage. Rather, Williamson proposes that Ezra 9–10 is not the first instance of intermarriage, but that after Ezra's instructions on the Mosaic Law, the offending groups were moved to repentance (Williamson 1985: 129-30, 149-51). But Williamson neglects to account for the fact that not all interethnic marriage is banned prior to Ezra (for a full discussion, cf. Hayes 1999: 9-13; Hayes 2002).

It is interesting that Ezra 9.1–10.18a discusses intermarriage without ever coining a Hebrew term for the act. Instead, intermarriage is described as an abominable act. The reader is clued into the circumstances of mixed marriages when the texts' producers note in והתערבו זרע הקדש בעמי הארצות (Ezra 9.2) ('and they exchanged the holy seed with the peoples of the lands'). Clearly, there is a breach in the cultural life of the people who are represented by the writers and editors of the text. The external boundaries that the writers and editors of the text understood to constitute the cultural norm had been defied. Moreover, God's covenant had been betrayed. But Ezra's composers, who portray Ezra as sensitive, holy, and God-fearing, depict him as knowing nothing about the defiled holy seed before being fed the secondhand data by informants.

Although Daniel Smith-Christopher seems certain about which group constitutes the referenced foreigners, others raise pertinent questions about who is considered foreign and who is not (Smith-Christopher 1994: 246). The text is unclear. The foreigners could be construed as Hittites, Ammonites, Canaanites, Moabites, or Egyptians, as mentioned in Ezra 9.1. Here, Williamson offers the idea that the list of nations is in fact a stereotypical formula equating the peoples of the land to the Canaanites. Williamson understands the list of nations as warning against Otherness, particularly on the part of those whose religious practices constitute apostasy if practiced by God's chosen people. The list of peoples and nations that opens Ezra 9 is an assorted group of Israel's most contentious and renowned enemies. For Williamson, the Canaanites or any one of these groups of people were capable of leading God's bride into apostasy (Williamson 1985: 130-31). On the other hand, it is reasonable to posit that the returning exiles considered themselves the *true Yehudites* based on their economic status, a sign of God's blessing; their former leadership roles in the pre-exilic community; and their current privileged relationship with the Persian Empire. As such, they may have dubbed the 'peoples of the land' *foreigners*. Conversely, it is also possible that 'the peoples of the lands' thought of themselves as Yhwh's select group, thereby construing the golah community the outsiders (Williamson 1985: 129-30; Clines 1984; Blenkinsopp 1988; Japhet 1981). Other alternatives exist.

It may be that a combination of mixed ethnic entities, including Persians, married Yehudites who were either left in the land or more likely, members of the golah community. If so, this point is significant for two reasons: (1) a specific brand of endogamy, intrafamilial marriage, may have been endorsed by at least one of the two entities as the proper remedy for establishing social distance from all other social groups; and (2) this form of marriage was likely viewed as a mechanism for securing economic balance for the upper echelon of Yehudite society. The struggle reflected in Ezra 9–10 most likely involved the activities of two relatively affluent groups—one group comprised of those who were in power and who married foreigners, against those who aimed to recast the societal structure in Yehud to ensure power, thereby excluding the intermarried group. That the second group or their descendants are the most fitting candidates to accept responsibility for propagating the version of events recorded in the Masoretic Text of Ezra 9–10 is one means of assessing and comprehending the power dynamic in the community's life at the origination of the text or at some point before its canonization.

Understanding Persian Yehud as the byproduct of a power struggle relevant to collective identity formation enables readers to make sense of the problem of interethnic marriage. When all of the interrelated issues evident in Ezra 9–10 are considered carefully, readers can recognize that the problematic consists of several distinct elements. For example, in Ezra 9–10, the major storyline could be misconstrued or overlooked entirely. However, if the focus is adjusted so that specific issues such as gender, economics, sexuality and the politics of interethnic marriage are raised, then the contours of the struggle are both delimited and better nuanced.

Thus, the overall need to create a functional, collective social identity drove Ezra to summon the people and issue an edict. Then Shecaniah affirmed the edict against intermarriage, leading the people in a group affirmation. According to sociologist Karen Cerulo, implicit in an anti-essentialist perspective of the social construction of identity is the notion that 'every collective becomes a social artifact—*an entity molded, refabricated, and mobilized in accord with the reigning cultural scripts and centers of power*' (Cerulo 1997: 387, emphasis mine). While several biblical scholars maintain that foreign women and their children remained a part of the Yehudite community, thereby devaluing the significance of the edict against intermarriage, the indictment against foreigners in the community not only represents the ouster of unwanted factions of society but features ongoing concerns with purity. As such, the edict affirms the importance of establishing new boundaries for the community. The systems of exchange, in conjunction with different ideologies—class (or economic), racial, religious or (ethnic), gender and sex-related—emerged as the intermarriage problem was summoned by Law (the paternal family). In response, alternative means and social values were instituted as Law.

Purity in marriage functioned as the principal part of the new symbolic system. Conditions in postexilic Yehud were profoundly different than they were in the pre-exilic world. Therefore, rather than allow intermarriage, as was permissible in the pre-exilic context, perhaps influenced by the Holiness Code, Ezra's uttered ban against intermarriage pushed back against the notion entirely. Marriage was the one system in ancient Yehud that was inclusive enough to encompass all of the interrelated ideological factors explored in this study, and to simultaneously bring the required homogeneity into the Achaemenid era Yehudite culture that would permit formation of a collective identity. Thus, marriage functioned as one of the '*symbolic boundaries* or mental maps through which individuals define[d] "us" and "them", simultaneously identifying the most salient principles of classification and identification that are operating behind the definitions' of the culture (Cerulo 1997: 395; Lamont 1995). In fact, by utilizing a construct similar to Michèle Lamont's as an analytical apparatus for understanding Ezra 9–10, it is plausible to view the ban against intermarriage in Ezra–Nehemiah as a reflection of the fluid, plural, and decentralized nature of collective identity which presents ideological problems for modern readers who may have assumed that paradigms such as marriage in the biblical text represent directives that are fixed in time or inflexible standard(s) for contemporary cultures to follow (Lamont 1995: 350). The central point is not that foreign women and their offspring left Yehud immediately or even within that generation. But by making intermarriage taboo, these early Jewish communities were able to use legal means to recast a tradition of intermarriage and eventually retain distinctive boundaries that helped to define the reconstructed, postexilic group identity (Davies 1982: 1033). By juxtaposing 'us' against the religious, racial, economically, gendered, and sexual Other, collective identities in Yehud were re-formulated.

It is possible, then, to need boundaries within a community, to employ segregation as a tactic for developing the necessary boundaries without negatively evaluating or judging the cultural Other. Considering the role of race, religion, class, gender and sexuality in the formation of collective identities, none of these categories of characteristics is more salient than the others. The concept of foreignness is an integral part of each notion and it binds them together as an overarching theme of Ezra 9–10. The diffuse elements of collective identities materialize relative to the constituents in every culture. If ideology is defined as 'a matter of the lived relation between men and their world' then gender demands a discussion of the norms that guarantee male dominance (Silverman 1992: 34). As a matter of practicality, the dominant mode of production and the symbolic Law form an artificial distinction between the kinds of ideology which have been discussed, because ideologies of class, gender, race, religion and sexuality are intertwined, always intersecting and overlapping in critical ways with the components of the dominant fiction (Silverman 1992: 34).

Ezra 9–10 is a cultural product with all of the accompanying positive and negative overtones of all such artifacts. The overriding strategy at play in postexilic biblical texts was to create a collective identity by placing the Yehudites in opposition to the Others in every imaginable way. Devising group norms beyond the ban against intermarriage included making certain gender- and sex-related characterizations such as correlating the female role in sex with passivity, and passivity equivalent to femininity; and associating certain male sexual positions with femininity and foreignness (Lev. 18). In addition, the entirety of the Holiness Code prescribes behaviors that helped cohere a new communal identity.

The text gives no explicit reason for the community's split decision concerning intermarriage in Ezra 10.15-17, but contemporary anthropological and sociological evidence weighs heavily in favor of the argument that the postexilic task of reforming a collective identity explains why many would have adhered to the edict. Economic advantage appears to have been the reason that some men intermarried; the narrative also makes clear that economic concerns may have caused some the Yehudites to *give up* their foreign wives and their children because the penalty for keeping them was forfeiture of their property and communal standing (Ezra 10.8). Ezra represented the establishment—the Persian Empire, and the בני הגולה ('the sons of the exile') or the ex-aristocrats who once led Judah. It would have been advantageous for these men to marry exogamously and to attempt to enforce specific understandings of land-inheritance laws, in addition to pushing the idea that they—not the Others—constituted God's chosen group. Pragmatically, the men among the peoples of the land who rose to leadership in Yehud during the exile may have set forth ideas of endogamy, but for no other reason than to keep the land that they may have worked during the exilic years. Economics and politics trumped ethnic solidarity as neither of the political rivals seemed eager to relinquish their respective gains.

Insofar as Mieke Bal invokes the ethnographic context as a part of the anthropological code, the practical way of life in Persian Yehud may be decoded by answering a series of inquiries: Who speaks?, Who writes?, and Who hears? The subjects of these questions are presumably the most elite males. The objects are the foreign women and their children, Yehudite women, and men of lesser stature.

In part, the query 'Who speaks?' helps the reader identify the most powerful actors, those with the authority to vocalize concerns and to effect change. These officials are indeed deemed to have power. They are part of the status quo, or may wish to be part of the group that benefits from a relationship with the Persian Emperor. The precise identity of these officials is a legitimate question; the text lists several groups and the reader may imply others. By this time, it is likely that both the golah community and the peoples of the land had established rosters of leaders. The peoples of the land, however, may have had a vested interest in seeking Ezra's assistance to help blunt any chances of the returnees reestablishing their power base.

Ezra seems to illustrate the power to speak when he addresses God in prayer, and later when he is involved in reaffirming the edict against intermarriage to the people. Certainly, as the Persian King's emissary and a priest, Ezra seems to hold tremendous sway (Blenkinsopp 1988: 418-19). In reality, however, the edict against intermarriage emerges from Shecaniah's lips (Ezra 10.2-4). Ezra only validates Shecaniah's words by leading the people in an oath to uphold Shecaniah's stated position. Other than the officials who bring the original complaint, Shecaniah, Ezra, and the narrator, all of whom speak on behalf of disposing of intermarriages, no other individual voices appear. Only the group voice narrated as indirect discourse is heard. The group responses appear inauthentic in part due to their blanket homogeneity within the narrative structure. Although the foreign wives, their children and the Yehudite women do not have expressed voices, theirs is an absent presence which signifies that discourse is a privilege of power that cannot exist outside of the social formations—class and gender structures—in which they were constructed.

'Who writes?' is an equally important question. Editing and writing are among the privileges of the elite. Louis Althusser discusses the hierarchy of education and skill as one of dominant forces of the state apparatus (Althusser 1972: 142-47). According to Althusser, the author, editor, and reader are parts of the ideological fabric of the state apparatus. Directly associated with these are the questions, 'With whom or to whom' and 'Under what circumstances or constraints' is the writing produced? Michele Barrett makes the point that Althusser's thesis of ideology and the state apparatuses leaves space for resistance to the system (a point considered below in connection with the query, 'Who hears?') (Barrett 1991: 21). Barrett notes that an Althusserian perspective makes ideologically complicitous with the text any reader who recognizes and comprehends Ezra 9–10. Such a perspective would also dominate or dictate the circumstances and constraints under which the discussion of intermarriage would proceed.

Similarly, we encounter the question, 'Who sees?' Again, Ezra is privileged to see and speak, as are Shecaniah, the priests, and Levite informants. In narratological terms, these men are internal focalizers who are able to perceive, consider what they observe, then act (Bal 1991: 91).

Critical to what is seen and discussed in Ezra 9–10, is what is present in the text but *not* seen or discussed. The foreign women and their children, as objects of the gaze, have no perceptible power. The Yehudite women are less valued than the foreign women as objects. Yehudite women were not directly or overtly mentioned in Ezra 9–10, but materially they had the most to lose.

Thus, while the forfeiture of male property and male status was the penalty for those who refused to forego their intermarriages, no mention is made of the Yehudite women, who without marriage were destined to become societal outcasts. The melodrama created by the men, in contrast to the Yehudite בתולות ('virgins') or the foreign women, creates a staggering scenario. Marriage etiquette in part compensated families economically. The socioeconomic crisis that would follow families unable to wed their daughters was at best, minimized and at worst, severely undercut by the male focalizers who did not envision the problem unleashed by their cacagomous marriages even when it had been thrust into plain view. While the focalizers were male, the narrative does not pretend that there was solidarity among them (Ezra 10.15-17). The differences illustrated by the intermarriage problem enunciate that alternative perspectives about several issues could have existed.

The discussion about 'viewers', wives, and potential wives raises the specter of the harlot-wife imagery and the 'gaze'. W.J.T. Mitchell argues that 'semiotics and ideology are inseparable' (Mitchell 1986: 49-51). He notes that there is 'no *essential* difference between poetry and paintings' (Mitchell 1986: 49). On these bases, the verbal imagery painted of the harlot-wife '…raises questions about the complicity of…the tradition [of the harlot-image] and misuse of the female body' (Bal 1994: 43; Stager 1985). In these terms, 'Who sees?' is complicitous in the creation of an entire politics of gender that not only affected Yehudite and foreign women, but women for generations.

The answer to the question, 'Who hears?' is Ezra, Shecaniah, and the other men. It is difficult to discern whether women are present in the public group. Some scholars argue that women were confined to the private sphere. Therefore, women probably were not in the group addressed (Stager 1985). They do not articulate a position. All available information about the female population comes through the eyes and ears of the men who see, hear, speak and otherwise act.

'Who acts?' represents Barrett's abovementioned resistance. This resistance is presented by Jonathan, Jahzeiah, and their supporters' stance against the intermarriage injunction. There is no recorded confrontation by the women. The foreign women, their children, and the Yehudite women are portrayed as objects, unable or unwilling to act on their own behalf. The picture that emerges from Ezra 9–10 is sufficiently detailed as to name a few male objectors, but in contrast refuses to shed light on the women and children most affected by the edict. While the text clearly conveys categories of men struggling for prestige in the community, defending themselves and taking action in response to the edict against intermarriage, the paucity of details concerning the women from Yehud, the foreign women, and their children creates an image of utter powerlessness, or apathy. Yet, the shameless harlot-wife is configured as a mute but brazen foreigner who is sexually lewd. She is portrayed as someone with an immense sexual appetite who is frequently engaged with foreign partners, thus polluting them. This audaciously depicted woman hardly fits the bill of someone who would shrink in the face of the devastating news imparted in the edict against intermarriage. Nor does the tradition of strong ancient Israelite women suggest they would have remained silent with so much at stake. In this way, the social code of Ezra 9–10 ‘neglects intelligible detail[s]’ about the lives of women (Jameson 1988: 29).

Through the anthropological reading, we can parse reactions to the edict for against intermarriage. The reading highlights institutionalized dominance based on difference, and outlines a premise for understanding the inter- and intra-relational dynamics that may have existed in Persian Yehud.

The pervasive metaphor assigns to the foreigners deviant sexual appetites and habits (cf. Lev. 18). The ‘Strange woman’, for example, depicts a foreigner with dangerous sexual habits. Proverbs issues warnings and sexual boundaries to postexilic men. Proverbs like Ezra and other postexilic writings reiterate the proper relationships and gender guidelines as well as appropriate communal boundaries. Thus, Ezra 9–10 thoroughly explores what it means to be Yehudite, leaving nothing to chance as the group reconstitutes its collective identity. Ezra’s Yehud conformed to ideas articulated by sociologist Michèle Lamont and others. Boundaries, beginning with the exhaustive ban against intermarriage, were institutionalized as a part of Yehud’s entire cultural repertoire. Through systematized categorizations such as the repeated use of the harlot-wife metaphor concerning foreign gender and sexualities, Yehudites developed categories by means of stereotyping to define identity as a collective process and as a part of patterned behaviors (Lamont 1995: 351). Members of this postexilic community articulated in no uncertain terms their collective identity by stating who and what the group should be, and sometimes more strongly by outlining what it ought not to be and do.

The Ideological Reading

The thrust of the anthropological reading is to contextualize information gleaned from Ezra 9–10 while simultaneously developing a larger understanding that applies to many elements of human societies. The ideological reading links the anthropological analysis and the elements discussed in Chapters 1 to 4. In the Introduction, I argued that there is a stalemate of sorts in biblical scholarship about credible ways of knowing and who is capable of establishing meanings of biblical texts. But I have simultaneously insisted that there are several ways of analyzing Ezra 9–10. The ideological reading of Ezra in many ways reflects my twin concerns: both the text and how perspectives in biblical scholarship could be opened up. I am suggesting that in biblical studies, a sea change in both the institutionalized structure that supports the discipline and how biblical texts may be interpreted and received is underway. The ideological reading proposed here is based on these premises.

Fredric Jameson's work captures this notion more fully. He describes textuality and semiotics as 'transformations in our modes of thinking rather than in those of more concrete structures or situations' for which he credits contributions by R.G. Collingwood, T.S. Kuhn and M. Foucault (Jameson 1988: 18). Jameson goes further to describe textuality:

> As a methodological hypothesis whereby the objects of study of the human sciences (but not only of the human ones: witness the genetic 'code' of DNA!) are considered to constitute so many texts that we *decipher* and *interpret*, as distinguished from the older views of those objects as realities or existants or substances that we in one way or another attempt to *know*. The advantages of such a model are perhaps most clearly visible in the nonliterary disciplines, where it seems to afford a more adequate 'solution' to the dilemmas of positivism than the more provisory one of phenomenological bracketing. The latter merely suspends the ontological problem and postpones the ultimate epistemological decisions, while in some ways actually reinforcing the old subject/object dichotomy that was at the root of the contradictions of classical epistemology. The notion of textuality, whatever fundamental objections may be made to it, has at least the advantage of strategy, of cutting across both epistemology and the subject/object antithesis in such a way as to neutralize both, and of focusing the attention of the analyst on her own position as a *reader* and on her own mental operations as interpretation (Jameson 1988: 18).

This, then, roughly governs the contours of the ideological reading. In Jamesonian terms, I will provide a further explanation of intermarriage in Ezra 9–10 without the constraints of empiricism or tending to the 'false problems' designated by other agendas and institutions. The goal is to reconstitute Ezra 9–10 in such way as to resolve ['my "facts" back into the many semantic or syntactic components of the text [I am about] to decipher' (Jameson 1988: 18).

According to Jameson, ideological criticism is premised on understanding ideology as a unique and ambiguous 'cultural or "mental" entity…an object of study [that] has two distinct faces, [system and function], two incommensurable modes of appearance, which any adequate ideological criticism must register at one and the same time…neither of which is satisfactory taken all by itself' (Jameson 1978: 418). Jameson argues that ideology is more than either a *value system* or *false consciousness* (Jameson 1978: 417-18). He asserts that 'ideology can form a system of values and beliefs…useful to grasping how from some central ideological stance or value—such as "hierarchy" or "nature" a whole series of consequences, a whole set of minor ideological propositions or implications logically follow' (Jameson 1978: 418). In the anthropological reading, I demonstrated aspects of the cultural code in Persian Yehud. In this rereading of Ezra 9–10, I will illustrate not only the presence of different ideological strains, but how intersecting perspectives, values, and ideologies about class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality collaborate and sometimes contradict.

To accomplish this goal, I will adopt aspects of Jameson's works, *The Political Unconscious* and *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays.* In the *Political Unconscious*, Jameson demonstrates a three-step diachronic process for reading (Jameson 1981). He notes that as readers of signs, attentiveness to the *leaps in logic* rather than assuming coherence and wholeness is imperative. Here Ezra 9–10 will be read not 'as though under the effect of a drug (that of recommencement, of difference), not the *real* text, but a plural text: the same and new' using the work of Roland Barthes (Barthes 1974: 16). Barthes suggests that it is important to look for the ways that the text conveys messages by nature of shifting signifiers or by omitting information, or how connotation could change by virtue of data obscured from the immediate view (Jameson 1981; Barthes 1974).

The ideological reading of Ezra 9–10 will encompass gender, race, religion, sexuality and social class, all as parts of an interactive multidimensional dynamic at work in the text. The reading will be developed through the prism of Jameson's three semantic horizons: symbolic acts in the text; views of how power relations functioned; and an explanation of the modes of production at work.

The ostensible message of Ezra 9–10 is the confession and conversion of the unfaithful people who had intermarried but through repentance were united into one God-fearing ethnic entity. Ezra 9–10 is imbued with hints of pornographic and misogynistic imagery. This evaluation of the text is based on the signs articulated in the text and within the larger context of the Hebrew Bible. Several Hebrew Bible scholars have noted these pornographic (re)presentations of women and foreignness in prophetic literature (Brenner 1993; Day 2000; Dijk-Hemmes 1993; Johnson 1995, 1999; Setel 1985; Weems 1989, 1995; Zvi 2004; Yee 2003; Glazier-McDonald 1987). Thus, first the text will be reread to explore the value systems created by a maze of ideologies that exploit and sometimes link gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and economic matters.

It may seem odd to describe a biblical passage as proliferating pornography or as reflecting hatred of women. Clearly, the tradition of biblical authority in the western world and its spread by Christians into other global communities encourages readers of the Bible to suspend critique of this document. Thus, modern readers recognize misogyny and profanity utilized by rap and hip-hop artists as inappropriate, and rightly so. But because the biblical text has been ordained as sacred literature, by *certain men* many centuries ago, justifications are made for biblical imagery that would be objectionable in any other milieu. This endowment of power is wielded over biblical consumers, who in good faith read the text as the inspired Word. My point here is not to be disrespectful of the text or any tradition. But I want to investigate Ezra 9–10 with due suspicion and curiosity about the imagery utilized in it, especially the lewd wife image that implicitly denigrates women and deems certain sexual behaviors deviant and aligned to foreignness. It is appropriate to acknowledge, again, that this text was not addressed to many communities that eventually took it as Scripture. Ehud Ben Zvi defends the book of Hosea by noting that the biblical text generally was not addressed to women, but to ancient Israelite men. Nor was it addressed to the diverse communities of faith (Zvi 2004: 363-65; Satlow 2001). However, the fact that the biblical text may have been originally addressed to an ancient male audience does not mean that contemporary readers should accept uncritically its message, metaphor, and imagery, nor that women should not take issue with its contents. Nor does it mean that the text does not reflect specific views about what constitutes virile masculinity, or proper sexuality—that is, sex unlike that practiced by the foreign Other. Therefore, the second task of the ideological reading is to demonstrate specifically how Ezra 9–10 is misogynistic and to show how it thereby disserved Yehudites and foreigners alike. As a part of this discussion about gender, I will describe how notions of foreignness in Ezra 9–10 are also linked to perceptions of male sexuality and ethnicity.

While Ezra's readers are moved to compassion for the impoverished Yehudite community in the midst of the awe-inspiring power of the Achaemenid Empire, the passage reflects concerns and responses of only a subset of the postexilic community—that is, a few elite men who were focused on themselves even at the expense of the communal whole. In these ways, the logic of Ezra 9–10 contradicts principles such as unity that are purportedly implicit in the concept of community and highlighted in the anthropological reading above. Thus, the third undertaking of the ideological reading is to render explicit examples of similar contrasts in logic or rationale. Fourth, I will examine briefly two ways that social or cultural code (the code of knowledge) intersects to engage one's social location (Jameson 1988: 28-29; Barthes 1974). This is an essential task: while some would claim that the biblical text has a singular, objective meaning I am arguing for a plurality of entrances into and exits from the text (Barthes 1974).

Social location is tapped consciously and overtly or subconsciously. It is not a justification or apologetic, but an attempt at transparency that is often refused by those who claim objectivity. As noted in the Introduction, I make no such pretense; the ethnic components of Ezra 9–10 in particular hold a wealth of interests for me precisely because of my social location. Intellectually gripped by antiquity and Judaism, but influenced by my upbringing as an African-American during the civil rights years, Ezra 9–10 presents a barrage of signs, many of them frankly uninvited. For example, at the outset of the narrative, Ezra explains how his informants advise him that the people are intermarrying. Such news for ancient Yehudites was disturbing because of potential economic losses from exogamous marriages. The ban against intermarriage could seem rash and at least superficially segregationist to contemporary readers. Understandably, those affected by or sensitive to forced separation personally or historically—as separated or separator—are vulnerable to presumptions that would link Ezra 9–10 to racialized or religious biases (Vernon 2005; Dailey 2004). However, the appearance created by the ban contradicts the empirical sociological and anthropological analyses reported in the previous Chapter. These studies suggest that the behavior reported by Ezra is typical of exiles, and is thus rooted in traumatic *experiences*—not hostile *ideologies*—that, unlike American slavery and Jim Crow, may have little if anything to do with animosity toward the stigmatized Other.

On the most benign level, Ezra 9–10 is about God, God's people, and their story of confession after intermarrying. But upon reading the decontextualized ancient narrative many years later, the command to separate from the ethnic Other often had unintended consequences. For example, many white southerners since Jim Crow have interpreted Ezra 9–10 and similar biblical texts as supporting segregationist ideations (Dailey 2004; Livingstone 1984; Chappell 1998). They suppose(d) that non-white Americans were inferior 'foreigners'. Therefore, the Other would not make appropriate marriage partners. In 1950, sociologist August Hollingshead found that 'racial mores' provide the most difficult cultural barrier to surmount in selecting spouses. Hollingshead's findings seem to fit hand in glove with the decontextualized Scripture (Hollingshead 1950: 621). Out of context, the charge that 'the holy seed has been defiled' (Ezra 9.2c) apparently implies separation due to pollution caused by the ethnic Other. This interpretation seems to threaten the book of Ezra's inherent status as canonical sacred literature, because it would seem to endorse racial ideologies that have long since been discredited as arousing needless suspicion or motivating injustice. To the suspicious, the holy book appears to be a humanly inspired polemic because it seems to affirm institutionalized prejudices. Thus, the ancient social code of Ezra 9–10 seemingly contradicts elements of the book's current symbolic meaning.

For others, those who harbor resentment and anxiety toward the Other, rereading Ezra 9–10 may present no contradiction at all. For them, Ezra 9–10 represents the epitome of holiness as it seems to justify their racial and religious biases. Indeed, the Book represents a sacred justification for their aversion to interethnic marriage and their embrace of political agendas such as Jim Crow (Vernon 2005). These are examples of ways in which the reader's social location can interfere with a supportable interpretation of the text.

Ezra 9–10 is riddled with peculiar incidents that defy logic. For example, Ezra, a priest, has engaged his people for several months. Once he is informed about the intermarrying, Ezra's grievous response helps the reader understand the gravity of the offense, but also leaves her to wonder why he was unable to detect the presumably visible foreignness of the women and their children before being told about them. It is difficult to reconcile Ezra's high status and priestly role with his inability to perceive this vast and obvious problem, and it is frankly bizarre that he is ignorant about such damning news that threatens the people whose livelihood he is responsible for safeguarding. If these aspects of the narrative alone are not troublesome, Ezra's revulsion when he hears the news may be. As would any good priest, Ezra commences prayer and fasting when informed about the transgression. He is so distraught that he suddenly rends his garments and plucks out hair from his head and beard. It would appear that such deep mourning would be warranted only in the most severe distress or wrongdoing. But one would think that any offense severe enough to warrant such an extreme reaction would have been detected without the help of an intermediary. Ultimately, questions concerning Ezra's lack of knowledge about this fateful sin are all the more intriguing.

Ezra's prayer turns up further curiosities and inconsistencies. The opening verses of Ezra 9 note merely that the holy seed has been exchanged and that a number of officials and priests are polluted by engaging foreignness. Ezra singles out ethnicity in his recollection of the informants' news and in his prayer, thereby leaving foreignness unexplored. But clearly, foreignness and marriage were tied to idolatry and syncretism, pragmatically and metaphorically. Foreignness had other corrosive affects (Foote 1901: 64-69). Foreign political and military alliances constituted equally grave problems for ancient Israel and Judah at various points (cf. Isa. 36.1-22). Thus, if foreignness had caused such severe pollution as to make both the people and the land impure, then it is irrational to think that maintaining any relationship with foreigners, even a political relationship such as that between Ezra and the Persian king, would have been acceptable.

Other incongruent notions concern Ezra's legal presentation that was mentioned earlier. While Ezra refers to Law banning intermarriage, no such decree or statute exists in Torah. In contrast to Ezra's claim, intermarriage according to the Deuteronomic Code is permitted except with certain specified groups. Based on the prayer, Ezra is keenly aware that intermarriage and syncretism are historically problematic (Ezra 9). A problem so endemic to the people would have warranted his special attention in his delineation of the Law. But even if Ezra attended to this problem before getting the informants' report, previous statutes were less sweeping than the ban in Ezra 9–10. What Law does he recite and apply in the edict against intermarriage?

It is possible that Ezra presented the ban in his original address, only to find later that the edict had been ignored. Even based on the Holiness Code and previous precedents, the people may not have been entirely sure that what they were doing was wrong. The precepts underlying the edict against intermarriage could have been developed as a rejoinder to circumstances confronting the priest, just as the community's coming together in light of the exile was. Concerning collective identity and law Judith Howard writes:

> Identity talk is organized around two sets of norms, one concerning respect for situated identities and a commitment to basic moral precepts, and the second concerning ways in which people deal with failure to endorse these basic moral precepts, through denials of responsibility and other attributional tactics. Identity work is a micro-level performance of social (dis)order (Howard 2000: 372).

Ezra 10 diminishes an emphasis on ritual and highlights pragmatism. The narrator dispenses with Ezra, and in his place takes center stage with Shecaniah. If the activity recorded in Ezra 9 is lengthy, cultic, and formal, then Shecaniah's role is succinct, secular, and pragmatic. He acknowledges and crystallizes the problem en route to declaring how to carry out the edict. The narrator then resumes control and explains how and when to act (Ezra 10.2, 7-14). The narrator conveys in practical terms why the people ought to act: to overt God's wrath (Ezra 10.14). Whether or not the edict was fulfilled in Ezra's time, the ban helped to establish an important marker for identity development.

This last section of Jameson's first semantic horizon, which began with the discussion of social location and ethnic Othering, examines the symbolic code introduced in Ezra 9–10. The symbolic code 'proves to designate bodily and sexual realities…in which the body [is] the locus of a particular kind of non-universalizable private dimension of language', according to Jameson (Jameson 1988: 29; Barthes 1974). Roland Barthes looked to several psychoanalysts, including Jacque Lacan, to explore the symbolic code. To expand the symbolic code to include the communal body—Yehud (or the land)—as well as individual bodies, I will integrate Barthes' notion of the symbolic with philosopher Slavoj Žižek's work on metalanguages.

Before discussing matters of foreignness and bodies further, let us consider the implications of these terms used in Ezra 9.1 in slightly greater detail than in the earlier discussion of social location. The question of race and difference is raised by use of these terms: foreignness, bodies, pollution and semen. What was Ezra proposing, and did it have a racialized component or motivation? In a post-Holocaust world, when Jewish people were slaughtered based on faulty racial assumptions, it is necessary to delineate my position succinctly but without forfeiting rigor. In short, the response is no. Racism presumes power and privilege but the Yehudites enjoyed neither of these during the Achaemenid era. Therefore, by definition racism is not the cause of events in Ezra 9–10. For reasons that I have consistently argued, I have concluded that the predominant motivating force in Ezra 9–10 had nothing to do with race *per se*. Instead, I have maintained that the Yehudite community attempted to reconstitute its collective identity utilizing religious and economic ideologies and strategies. While it is likely that Ezra and the Yehudites had a socially constructed view of race, they were ultimately moved to act by different forces.

In Ezra 9–10, the bodily and sexual realities are several and varied. Ezra, a repentant intercessor (Ezra 9.3–10.5), mentions holy bodies, foreign bodies (Ezra 9.1-2), exchanged semen and powerfully polluting women who contaminated the exchanged semen and with it, the entire body of land given to Yhwh's people (Ezra 9.2, 10.2-3; 9.11-12). Although entire national entities are a part of the formulaic litany of foreign men and women initially implicated in the problem (Ezra 9.1b), the women alone are singled out as being capable of polluting. The text notes this point indirectly but unambiguously: it is the foreign women and their offspring who must leave Yehud in order to return the bodies—land, the male Yehudites who married them, and future offspring—to purity. Thus, the foreign women in Ezra 9–10 symbolize impure foreign femininity, powerful enough to impart ritual havoc—to castrate Yehudite men, as it were, and render them religious outcasts.

Foreign women in Ezra 9–10 embody power by virtue of their taboo status, but they also signify obstruction for Yehudites hoping to establish a new collective identity, regain autonomy over their land, and recover favor with Yhwh (Ezra 9.10–10.3). These women were, by virtue of their foreignness, alluring, defiling, and mysterious. Writing about biblical abominations and women, Julia Kristeva suggests the following:

> …Biblical impurity is permeated with the tradition of defilement, in that sense, it points to but does not signify an autonomous force that can be threatening for divine agency. I shall suggest that such a force is rooted, historically (in the history of religions) and subjectively (in the structuration of the subject's identity), in the cathexis of maternal function—mother, women, reproduction. But the biblical text—and therein lies its extraordinary specificity—performs the tremendous forcing that consists in subordinating maternal power (whether historical or phantasmatic, natural or reproductive) to the symbolic order as pure logical order regulating social performance, as divine Law attended to in the Temple. To the extent that the Temple is the Law, one is biblically pure or impure only with respect to social order, that is, with respect to the Law or the cult (as Neusner would have it). If, on the other hand, one tries to go back further into the archaeology of that impurity, one indeed encounters fear in the face of a power (maternal? natural?—and at any rate insubordinate and not liable of being subordinate to Law) that might become autonomous evil but is not, so long as the hold of subjectivity and social symbolic order endures (Kristeva 1982: 91).

Even without the element of otherness, Kristeva's suggestions about how the biblical text interprets women are damning. Incompatibly with purity, foreign women have inscribed on their bodies an invitation to chaos, death and danger despite the fact that they provide a path for economic survival for some of the men in Ezra 9–10 (cf. Ezek. 16; Hos. 1–3; Prov. 1–8).

There are other problems associated with these 'quintessentially abject' bodies. Barbara Creed asserts that patriarchal cultural discourse frequently represents women's bodies as 'fluid, unstable, and chameleon-like' (Creed 1995: 87). Similarly, Kristeva adds, 'Unlike the male body, the proper female body is penetrable, changes shape, swells, gives birth, contracts, lactates, bleeds. Woman's body reminds man of his "debt to nature" and as such threatens to collapse the boundary between human and animal, civilized and uncivilized' (Kristeva 1982: 102).

Unlike Kristeva, Creed does not rely on the biblical text to validate these ideas about female bodies. However, many of the negative ascriptions associated with women's bodies are discussed in the Holiness or Priestly Codes. Kristeva makes another claim similar to Creed's. She writes that the foreign women's bodies were first penetrated, then they received the 'holy semen'. Their wombs were the site of its spoilage. This position is emphasized because *only* the foreign women and their offspring are to be 'put away' (Ezra 10.3). As for the Yehudite male bodies who intermarried, the text raises unanswered questions. For example, if penetrating a woman could damage the 'holy semen', then what were the physical consequences of intercourse for the males?

Other matters emerge about male bodies as a result of exploring bodies and sexualities as a part of the symbolic code in Ezra 9–10. Masculinities and male sexualities are perceptible by considering the metalanguages that persist as a result of perspectives about femininities and female sexualities. By metalanguages, I do not mean the 'language being talked about' (Curry 1950: 348-49). Rather I refer to a secondary system which develops as a result of 'signs from the first [system]' (Barthes 1973: 42, 92-94). Slavoj Žižek claims that metalanguages always exist: 'Every "objective" statement about things includes some kind of self-distance, a rebounding of the signifier from its "literal meaning". In short, language is always saying, more or less, *something other* than what it means to say' (Žižek 1989: 158; Barthes 1973). The tie between foreign bodies, concepts of foreignness and proper sexuality is an essential thesis of Ezra 9–10. But it is expressed in the text's metalanguage and, perhaps more perceptibly, within the context of the larger Hebrew Bible. According to Ezra 9–10, sexualities were strictly socially constructed in Persian Yehud. The edict against intermarriage makes clear that foreign sexuality was impermissible due to its dangerous, polluting effects. Thus, it was unsafe for men to have intercourse with foreign women (Ezra 9.1-2). The metalanguage of the intermarriage edict reveals that it was equally problematic for males to sexually engage foreign men in sexual intercourse. Moreover, if a male received anal intercourse he was engaging in foreign sexual practices (Lev. 18.22). He was triply jeopardized as the recipient of anal sex. Not only had he been polluted but he was acting foreign, and in terms of gender, he is relegated to a female's position. This view of proper sexuality is endemic in biblical texts (Jud. 19.22-26; Gen. 19.4-10; Lev.18.22). Thus, regarding ideologies in Persian Yehud, there was a pronounced hierarchy of sexual practices that defined proper gender roles and implied the status of those who refused to comply.

Societies' dominant fictions are comprised of ideological systems and a 'will to "totality"'—that is, a means by which the meaning 'of the infinite play of differences' is fixed or stabilized (Silverman 1992: 54). Several examples of these dominant fictions appear in Ezra 9–10 as consequences that flow from the edict against intermarriage. Awareness of the functions of dominant fictions provides a foundation for developing insight into how social entities construct meanings, thereby developing unity and identity (Silverman 1992: 54).

Understanding the primacy of Law for the Yehudite community is essential for grasping and contextualizing further concepts of gender and sexuality in Ezra 9–10. Exploring the exile and the intermarriage dilemma as sites of 'historical trauma[s]' links the Law to the phallus. By this I mean that the androcentric Law, as the foundation of the Yehudite community, developed communal perspectives about gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and other matters. According to Kaja Silverman,

> …[A historical trauma is] a historically precipitated but psychoanalytically specific disruption, with ramifications extending far beyond the individual psyche. To state the case more precisely, I mean any historical event, whether socially engineered or of natural occurrence, which *brings a large group of male subjects into such an intimate relation with lack that they are at least for the moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus*, and so withdraw their belief from the dominant fiction. Suddenly the latter is radically de-realized, and the social formation finds itself without a mechanism for achieving consensus (Silverman 1992: 55, emphasis mine).

Not only the exile, but the events afterwards reflect a disrupted (male) community—one that is out of touch. One notable indication is the tensions between those who recognized the trauma and those who did not. At best, the patent unwillingness of some men to comply with the edict demonstrates indifference; at worst, it reveals disinterest in community (Ezra 10.15). Also, it may be that the vast difference between other biblical legal codes and Ezra's rendition of the Law in the ban against intermarriage reflects the deeply perceived need to repair the foundation of the community's social structure (Ezra 10.3).

The symbolic code offers other ways to consider key parts of Ezra 9–10. Initially, intermarriage literally met the need for economic survival for a limited number of Yehudite men. As the men, women, and children sat with Ezra weeping and confessing (Ezra 10.1-5), the economic demands that first drove the men gives way to the desire on the part of most to see Yehud reconstituted as an independent entity enriched by the blessings of Yhwh. Žižek might categorize this reversal as a Lacanian 'negation of the negation' 'insofar as it entails a *return to the object* annulled by the passage from need to demand: it produces a new object that replaces the lost/sublated object of need—*objet petit a*, the object-cause of desire' (Žižek 1994: 70). Thus, for the men who confessed, the object-cause of desire—that is, Yhwh's approval accompanied by his blessings—settles 'the mortifying deadlock of the antagonistic tension between need and demand' (Žižek 1994: 70). Ezra's edict against intermarriage, then, functions as *symbolic* '*appeasement*', the way out of Yehudite economic distress and the path to economic prosperity, autonomy in Yehud, and the blessings of Yhwh (Žižek 1994: 70-71). The stress imposed by Yehudite male intermarriage not only induced economic hardship on all other Yehudites, but according to the Hegel's 'unity of the opposites', these men passed over Yehudite women and the need for community-building when they positioned themselves in extreme juxtaposition to these women (Žižek 1994: 71).

The first semantic horizon provided an opportunity to explore the notion of social location as I examined the social or cultural code, the empiric and hermeneutic codes, and the symbolic field. In the second semantic horizon, I will briefly discuss some of the several antagonistic class discourses in Ezra 9–10. I will demonstrate ways in which the text highlights class differentiation by utilizing religion and gender. As a result, Ezra 9–10, is itself, an external expression of the ideologies. According to Žižek,

> …This materialization of ideology in external materiality reveals inherent antagonisms which the explicit formulation of ideology cannot afford to acknowledge: it is as if an ideological edifice, if it is to function 'normally', must obey a kind of 'imp of perversity', and articulate its inherent antagonism in the externality of its material existence (Žižek 1997: 4).

Moreover, as one of several antagonistic class discourses, the ideologies proliferated by Ezra 9–10 involve everyday life (Žižek 1997: 4). Thus, the views about foreignness, women, children, economic viability, sexuality and gender in Ezra 9–10 invite current audiences to concur with its perspectives and adhere to them.

As one of several antagonistic discourses, Ezra 9–10 reinforces the suggestion that women and children are disposable (Ezra 10.3). Both are weeping with the men, who recognize that they must 'put away their foreign wives and their offspring' to please Yhwh and the Law (Ezra 10.3). Dissolving the family in this fashion undermines the presumption of family unity maintained by a powerful male, an idea that constitutes the dominant fiction (Silverman 1992: 15-16). But again, it is worth mentioning that some Ezra–Nehemiah scholars argue that the men of Ezra 9–10 only theoretically complied with Ezra's ban. If this is so, then the claim that family unity is integral to classic masculinity is upheld.

Any articulation of contentious class relations in Ezra 9–10 would be remiss to omit a more concrete discussion of the economic issues confronting the Yehudite and foreign women and their children as a result of the edict against intermarriage. In the earlier discussion about bridal-price, the economic predicament(s) of women without men in ancient Israelite and Yehudite culture was mentioned (Hiebert 1989). Although Paula Hiebert's eloquent essay focuses on widows and orphans, her analysis is in many ways applicable to unmarried women and their children. Hiebert highlights the cultural and economic barriers faced by such women (Hiebert 1989). Biblical narratives attest the varying degrees of devastation these women faced when the system failed them (cf. Ruth 1–3; Gen. 34; 38; 2 Sam. 13.16-19). However, it is essential to note that biblical law makes provisions for orphaned children and strangers (Deut. 10.17-19). Thus, both the foreign women and their children had the potential for some type of assistance if the laws were followed. The question here is the degree to which such laws would be followed. According to biblical narrative accounts and the Psalms, for example, it appears that foreign women who lost their spouses would be in similar economic circumstances as their female Yehudite counterparts before the edict against intermarriage.

The economic well-being of those who renounced the intermarriage edict also resurrects class concerns. A few men, with the support of the Levites, refused to obey the edict (Ezra 10.15). It was not in their economic interest to conform. However, as a part of the edict, it was noted that all who did not comply with the elders' call to gather in Jerusalem within three days confronted the loss of all of their רכוש ('movable property, cattle') as well as their standing within the assembly of the exiles (Ezra 10.8). It is plausible to conclude based on the threat to take רכוש that these men were not landowners, as has been argued. Given the severity of their violation (Ezra 9.6-15), it would seem that noncompliance would warrant the ultimate punishment—the loss of their most valuable possessions. If they were landowners, then it would seem that their ouster from the community—and the loss of land and status—would have been consistent with the most severe punishment available. Also, in contrast to Tamara Eskenazi, who argues that the Yehudite men's refusal to meet the terms of Ezra's edict represents their loyalty to their women (Eskenazi 1992: 36), I maintain that, from the outset, the men's primary concern was their own economic well-being. Their unwillingness to submit to the edict against intermarriage underscores that fact.

Questions about the value of foreign women emerge in Ezra 9–10 and are linked to the concept of covenant. When the men agreed to dispose of their foreign women, they first noted that they would make a covenant with Yhwh. This is not inconsequential. In the ancient Near East, covenants were founded on the twin precepts of loyalty and obligation. Thus, as long as the Yhwh would provide for the men, the men were obliged to govern themselves faithfully with Yhwh. However, in stark contrast, the foreign women who had been the mechanism for these men's economic survival were now being *put away* with little regard for them or their foreign children. There are two additional theoretical points to consider. First, when the Yehudite men took their foreign wives they were almost certainly struck by the harlot-wife image and the otherliness associated with these women. Apparently, the men, strongly motivated by either their economic need or the mutually beneficial arrangement with the Persian king, were able to shift from an automatic paradigm which equated the harlot-wife with foreignness to a more deliberative cognitive paradigm that permitted the men to overcome the notion that foreignness was necessarily problematic (Devine 1989: 5; DiMaggio 1997). Second, while some theorists have contended that prejudice is the inevitable result of stereotyping, Patricia G. Devine highlights the difference 'between knowledge and acceptance of a cultural stereotype' (Devine 1989: 5). Thus, knowing the stereotypes associated with foreigners, these Yehudite men may not have accepted them as congruent with their individual belief systems.

In Ezra 9–10, the hegemonic voices were males. They were privileged to speak whereas the women wept. This biblical scenario is emblematic of the traumatic Freudian moment when sexual differentiation is realized and woman is portrayed as 'castrated' or *lacking* (Doane 1987: 14-15). Thus, the women in Ezra 9–10 are voiceless and thereby denied adequate psychical process to develop personal identities. Utilizing Freudian and feminist analysis. Doane notes:

> Because she is situated as lack, nonmale, non-one; because her sexuality has only been conceptualized within masculine parameters (the clitoris understood as the 'little penis'), she has no separate unity which could ground an identity. In other words, she has no autonomous symbolic representation. But most importantly, and related to this failure with respect to identification, she cannot share the relationship of the man to the mirror. The male *alone* has access to the privileged specular process of the mirror's identification. And it is the confirmation of the self offered by the plane-mirror which, according to Irigaray, is 'most adequate for the mastery of the image, of representation, and of self-representation' (Doane 1987: 15).

Women in Ezra 9–10 were repressed by the hegemonic clout of men in other ways: (1) women functioned as the object of men's gaze; (2) various women as the daughters of Yehudite fathers may have been negatively affected by the stereotype associated with the harlot-wife metaphor; (3) some women's identity processes may have been jeopardized by generational stereotypes about women; (4) women who subjectively identified with the role of the harlot-wife theoretically faced internalizing the role (DiMaggio 1997; Devine 1989; Swidler 1986; Wurthnow 1984). To thrash out how these four positions are interrelated to the hegemonic roles of men and their corresponding effect on women in Ezra 9–10, several theoretical notes are necessary. Using sociology, cognitive psychology, and social cognition, I will examine these elements of Yehudite culture that are connected to the second semantic horizon—hegemonic repression of women and children exhibited in Ezra 9–10. 'The gaze' will be analyzed with the assistance of Freudian psychology. I will argue that ancient women's identities—both Yehudite and foreign—were affected by generationally embedded schemata or representations.

Schemata are cultural representations affecting individual and collective identity formation. They have a variety of influences on group members. Paul DiMaggio writes: 'schemata are both representations of knowledge and information-processing mechanisms. As representations, they entail images of objects and the relations among them' (DiMaggio 1997: 269). According to DiMaggio, some psychologists employ the term to construe highly abstract concepts while others use it to account for concrete activities, or complex social phenomena (DiMaggio 1997: 269). In addition, schemata have a generational quality that could provide consistence in group and individual behaviors over time (DiMaggio 1997: 269). Lastly, these representations of knowledge are flexible. Therefore, in the face of more deliberative cognition, schemata may change. An earlier example of this characteristic was suggested in connection with the Yehudite men.

Peter Berger argues that individuals participate in the social world by playing roles that are developed through a 'common stock of knowledge' (Wurthnow 1984: 42). Knowledge is parsed by divisions of labor and serves as an essential aspect in the development of one's individual identity. Berger insists that institutions create a stable backdrop for a social reality which is pertinent to the individual construction of identity (Wurthnow 1984: 43; Berger and Pullberg 1965). It is consistent with Berger's perspective to argue that the self is not predisposed 'to any particular configuration but [is] culturally relative in its formation' yet the social construction of identity is subject to reality and everyday life (Wurthnow 1984: 43). 'It is a social product incomprehensible apart from the particular social context in which it was shaped and is maintained' (Wurthnow 1984: 43). For Yehudite men and women, the institutionalized Law, prophetic tradition, and writings formed the basis of their lives. Particularly if culture is designated as a 'tool kit' of symbols, narratives, customs and perspectives used in different ways to construct strategies en route to resolving problems then it is difficult to conceive of how Yehudite men and women escaped its influence unscathed (Swidler 1986: 273). It seems improbable that gender ideologies extracted from such a metaphor went unnoticed by Yehudite men, nor that all were unhampered by it even after being bombarded by it repeatedly.

Undoubtedly, the binary construction I will use raises other hegemonic concerns, namely, that eroticism between women is either impossible or unworthy of discussion. However, the example that I posit here excludes female homoeroticism for several crucial reasons that are related to my overall argument. While the Yehudite community presumably contained women who loved and desired other women, they did not face legal recrimination (cf. Lev. 18.22) (Brooten 1996: 65; Satlow 1996). Although biblical law explicitly addresses male homoeroticism, no concern was expressed about female homoeroticism until well after Ezra had been written (cf. Lev. 18.22) (Satlow 1994; Brooten 1996: 65; Satlow 1996). Michael Satlow suggests that the problem for the rabbis was female–female marriage, not female homoeroticism (Satlow 1994). Furthermore, Bernadette Brooten observes that the only biblical text that could generally be interpreted as dealing with female eroticism is oblique, mandating that women not behave as the Egyptians and Canaanites (foreigners) (cf. Lev. 18.3) (Brooten 1996: 65). Brooten remarks, only later did the rabbis in the Sifra on Leviticus 18.3 (dated to c. 220 CE) directly address female–female eroticism. And when they did, the concern was about long-term relationships, not about morality in the present-day sense of the term (Brooten 1996: 64-65; Satlow 1994). For these reasons, I have omitted consideration of the females as the possible subjects of the harlot metaphor.

I have explained briefly three aspects of the relationship and effects of the harlot metaphor in the Yehudite community. But little has been theorized concerning male subjects who envision or gawk at women in this fashion. Of course, the metaphor is not equivalent to a *real* physical woman performing the acts associated with the foreign wife in the sight of a man, or receiving the violence that is often described in the metaphor (Ezek. 16; Hos. 1–3; Prov. 1–8) (cf. Barthes' discussion of signs and codes, Barthes 1973). But to pursue the logic linked to this last phase of the second semantic horizon, it is helpful to consider the text's hearers (or readers). In part, the importance of the harlot-wife image is that she represents utter depravity to those watching with their minds' eye. This depravation is necessary for the dominant fiction. Laura Mulvey writes, 'The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is it depends on the image of the castrated women to give order and meaning to its world. The idea of woman stands as linchpin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies' (Mulvey 1989: 14). The fascination with this image in the Hebrew Bible may stem from its ability to draw together subjects utilizing a familiar or reinforced set of presuppositions (cf. Mulvey 1989: 14). Therefore, in one sense, the Yehudite women and foreign women were on a par: they were disembodied as objects replaced by the metaphor. Thus, the metaphorization of these women left them not simply voiceless, in that their utterances were repressed, but depersonalized and dehumanized. Conversely, if Laura Mulvey is correct, then these very women who were disembodied were also a necessary part of the hegemonic power structure. Constructing the social formations of Yehudite culture absent their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers would have been impossible. This dependence by the hegemonic forces of culture thus refracts the *lack* of the male subjects. In Lacanian terms, the process of seeing the triangle created by the viewing subject is inverted, thereby shifting the position of the subject to the object. As a result, *the intention of looking* is stripped away 'and the visual field divested of its mastery; in its place the dominating viewer becomes the object in and of the spectacle' (Bolla 1996: 67-68). Ironically, if we can determine or imagine that the foreign or Yehudite women in Ezra 9–10 possessed any power, then it is through the process of inversion.

The third semantic horizon considers modes of production. Economic necessity was partially responsible for the events leading to the edict against intermarriage. Modes of production emerge on several competing planes. The concrete way in which Yehudite men married cacogamously and hypergamously to secure an income constitutes a mode of production. But even as Yehudite men were pledging to forfeit their foreign wives, they made a covenant with Yhwh. This is a seemingly small detail alluded to earlier in the discussion of the second semantic horizon. It merits further discussion because it is unconventional. By securing the relationship with Yhwh before relinquishing their other economic means, they theoretically made it possible to have access to the blessings of God before actually agreeing to give up their foreign wives. Thus, the blessings of Yhwh were comparable to another mode of production, another means to derive economic security. Moreover, these men would then presumably marry Yehudite women, thereby making themselves eligible to receive gifts exchanged in marriage from the bride's family. Through these marriages, Yehudite women's position in society would have been marginally elevated by virtue of marriage while simultaneously, the foreign women's position was lowered. The men who did not agree to Ezra's edict faced sanctions by the community—but if they continued in their relationships with the Persian authorities it seems unlikely that they would have faced any real reprisals (Ezra 10.8). By means of their marriages with foreign women, they had already separated themselves from the larger community in a meaningful way.

After Ezra's edict against intermarriage, Jewish authors continued to write about boundary issues as the newly formed community further defines itself against the Achaemenid Empire. Several postexilic biblical texts affirm that collective identity and boundary formation remained key issues for Jewish communities. Some of these discussions are available to contemporary readers. For example, Nehemiah; Genesis 34 and 39; the books of Ezekiel, Leviticus, Chronicles, Ruth and Esther, and arguably Jonah and Hosea all explore foreignness, separation, and even integration to explore different elements of identity. Also, several non-canonical works, including the Additions to Esther, the Book of Jubilees, the Testament of Levi and portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls (cf. *Jub*. 20.1-13; 21.1-26, 24; 25.1-22; 30.1-17, esp. 30.1-17; *T. Lev.* 9.9-10; 14.1-8, 5-8) address how to identify ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ specifically by means of discourses on intermarriage. The injunctions against intermarriage reflect even greater restrictions over time.

Chapter 6

ETHNICITY IN PERSIAN YEHUD AND MISINFORMED AMERICAN CULTURE

I began studying intermarriage in Ezra 9–10 because it encompasses several complex interrelated elements important to my social location. Until the early to mid-1990s, Hebrew Bible scholars had left ethnicity largely uninvestigated (Eskenazi 1992; Smith-Christopher 1994). In recent years, biblical scholars have increasingly examined ethnicity generally, and intermarriage specifically. Of these studies, several have focused on Ezra–Nehemiah. My own fascination with Ezra 9–10 is linked to my personal and national identities in the United States. Presently, illegal social conventions are widely associated with skinheads, white separatist groups and other so-called deviant populations. But Elizabeth Emens argues that these discriminatory ideologies are foundational to American law. Sociologist Joe Feagin, citing the US Constitution, likens America to 'a house founded on racism' (Feagin 2000: 6). Moreover, discrimination characterizes American life, frequently intersecting along intimate axes such as sexuality, marriage and disability. Emens writes, 'US law has historically *required rather than prohibited* discrimination in the intimate realm, most obviously, by saying certain people cannot pair with certain other people' (Emens 2009: 1315). In contrast to Ezra 9–10, the majority group in the US rather than the Yehudite minority during the Achaemenid era utilized separation as a tool.

Essential to establishing American identity is the way in which the most powerful segments of American society have interpreted and re-appropriated the Hebrew Bible. Here, the salient differential between minority and majority status is power. Unlike the Yehudites in late antiquity who were bereft of power, upper-class, property-owning white males have dominated American culture. This forms the sociological definition of racism. Feagin writes, '…We generally use the term *racism* in a broad sense to refer not only to the prejudices and discriminatory actions of particular white bigots but also to institutionalized discrimination and to recurring ways in which white people dominate black people in almost every major area of [American] society' (Feagin 1994: 3). By failing to recognize Persian Yehudites' minority position, modern white American Christians justified discriminatory practices by inserting themselves in the place of Jews (Platt 2002: 328;

Dailey 2004; Livingstone 1984). These naïve but widely accepted religious views have justified anti-Semitism against Jews, and racial prejudices against African-Americans and others. The Bible, then, was used as Divine evidence against the ethnic, gendered, and sexual Other, frequently to the detriment of lower-class whites as well (Dailey 2004; McCown 1956; Anderson 2004; Wilkie 2002). For example, Nathaniel Shaler claimed that racial attributes were steadfastly retained by groups and revealed through their socio-cultural traits (Livingstone 1984: 183). Among other sources, Shaler refers first to the Hebrew Bible. He remarks,

> The Hebrew Bible and all similar harvests of knowledge is full of these ideas as to the fixedness of racial attributes. Investigators have only extended the conception by showing that the varieties of men, following a common original law, hold fast to the ways of their forefathers, and that the moral as well as the physical characteristics of race are to a greater or lesser degree indelible, whether the given kind belong to the human or to a lower creature (Livingstone 1984: 183).

The biblical text supplied the ultimate, authoritative voice in the case against Otherness. These views integrated into laws resulted in rules governing every aspect of minority life, privileging whites above all Others. Therefore, as an African–American female biblical scholar it was my task to engage the underlying authority—the Hebrew Bible—to find the cause for Ezra's ban against intermarriage and whether these perceptions could be substantiated. I wanted see if texts such as Ezra 9–10 upheld hypotheses such as Shaler's, or if modern American views of that and other texts were racist extrapolations (Dailey 2004; Livingstone 1984). In the preceding Chapters I made the case against understanding Ezra 9–10 as a racist ideology, instead arguing that separation was a normative consequence of postexilic trauma. While questions arising from my social location provoked this inquiry, the goal was not to distort the passage by seeking a meaning outside of its historical context (cf. Thuesen 2003: 39; DeGregorio 2004).

Today, scientists roundly dispute biological theories of inferiority such as those embraced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The notion that racial, gendered, class-based or sexual Otherness is equivalent to inferiority has been entirely debunked. Moreover, the sciences have proven that there are few genetic differences among peoples and that the so-called races are socially constructed, thus rendering fallacious essentialist political, social and theological arguments (Berger and Pullberg 1965; Dailey 2004: 120-21 esp. n. 4). But even in the 'Age of Obama', 45 years after legislation was enacted to secure equality for all Americans, sparring about Otherness persists, with religion at its core. For this reason, the study of Ezra 9–10 is as relevant as it was when I started it.

The study was also preoccupied with issues related to gender and sexuality. The cult of true womanhood characterizing nineteenth-century women *differentiates* between white and African–American women (cf. Settles 2008: 454-56). ‘The cult of true womanhood structured worlds of private and public, the home and workplace, the family and the professions; [helping] to maintain class- and race-based hierarchies of power, justifying women’s exclusion…’ (Roberts 2002: 151). African–American women, like the ‘foreign woman’ in Ezra 9–10 and throughout the Hebrew Bible, are eroticized and their sexuality similarly deemed deviant (Washington 2007). This nineteenth-century distinction drawn between white and African–American women forms a parallel with the Yehudite and foreign women in Ezra 9–10, thus, provoking several questions for the passage. The most interesting of these examined in the study emerged due to the implicit relationship between Ezra and other postexilic biblical texts, especially the books of Proverbs and Leviticus. The anthropological and narratological-ideological readings of Ezra 9–10, while considering gender, draws in every element of the multi-dimensional dynamic in one way or another—most prominently sexuality and class or economic issues—by investigating two connections: (1) the intersection between foreign ethnicity and women’s sexuality as harlotrous; and (2) the economic implications of marriage for women. A tertiary issue explored deals with the implications for masculinity when associated with ‘foreign sexuality’.

While considering Ezra 9–10, I have strongly argued for respect of diversity in biblical scholarship without which the exegetical tradition is weakened. Diversity ensures a larger set of questions posed of texts and it will undoubtedly yield fuller, more nuanced responses to and understandings of texts when they are examined within their historical and cultural contexts.

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